TREASURY

of

MODERN POETRY

SPECIMEN

SUBMITTED FOR THE YEAR 1956

by

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PREFACE

The intention of this Treasury is to present a selection taken in the main from the work of some of the chief English poets writing in this century, and also from that of some of their American contemporaries. Not all the poems included were actually written in this century: a few, as, for example, some by Yeats, Kipling and Hardy, appeared before 1900, and there are, also, the notable exceptions of G. M. Hopkins and Emily Dickinson. Poems by Hopkins are commonly, and justly, included in anthologies of modern poetry, and the present Editor considers the inclusion of Emily Dickinson justifiable on very similar grounds. At the other end of the scale comes an appreciable number of poems belonging to 1940 and after.

It has been the aim of the Editor to provide a Treasury which is suitable, not only for school and college use, but which will make a definite appeal to the general reader interested in modern poetry and ready to welcome a guide to its best writers. Therefore, rather than draw on a larger number of poets for fewer examples of their work, he has preferred to present fewer poets and give more poems by each. In this way, though some fine poems are inevitably omitted, the more notable poets stand out in truer perspective, and it is possible to appreciate their quality and its variety more adequately. In some instances, however, notably that of Yeats, the requirements of the owners of copyright have precluded as wide a selection as the Editor would have desired.

In seeking to supply such a guide, the Editor's over-riding consideration has always been to select what is among the best poetry, whether of each poet or of the years covered. He has by no means always aimed at representing all the variety of any particular poet, but has felt free rather to emphasise what seem to him that poet's best characteristics, for instance, the lyric gift of W. H. Auden. Nor has he felt it necessary to represent all the *moods* of these troubled years: the horror of experience and the uncertainty and pain of spirit cannot be hidden, but he has let his preference for faith and hope play a part in shaping the selection. Again, largely from personal choice, he has left unrepresented the more extreme poetic developments of the later years, and has chosen nothing which he does not think that, as poetry, he understands.

To choose among so many poets as these years offer is a very difficult task. Every reader will, no doubt, note omissions which he regrets, and the Editor himself is sorry that he could find no space for Herbert Palmer, W. J. Turner, Richard Church, John Pudney, Norman Nicholson and Geoffrey Grigson, to name only a few. He can only hope that the Treasury, viewed as a whole, will reveal a harmony of aim and taste sufficient to show neither a choice too arbitrary, nor a preference too invidious.

No omission is due to inability to obtain permission from any poets for their inclusion. On the contrary, it has been the Editor's happy experience to meet with the kindest and most helpful response from all whom he approached and to whom acknowledgement is made elsewhere. In particular, he has to express his great gratitude to Miss Edith Sitwell, Sir Osbert Sitwell, and Mr. Gordon Bottomley for invaluable guidance in his choice of their poems.

A separate word needs to be said of the American poets included in this Treasury. It is obvious that they do not represent the poetry of America on the scale, and with the variety, of the English representation, but come rather as a kind of advance-guard of the notable host of American writers. The Editor hopes their inclusion may be taken as a broad hint to the reader that poetry in the English tongue does not cease at our western seaboard, and that personal exploration will be richly rewarded; and above all he would be proud to play a part, however small, in making the work of Emily Dickinson better known than, in his experience, it generally is to lovers of poetry such as he has in mind. Again, he has to regret the limitations imposed upon his choice, especially among the younger writers, and to express his warm thanks for the helpful response of the poets and other owners of copyright.

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AUTHORS, TITLES OF POEMS, AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the following Index will be found the titles of the poems of each author included in this Anthology followed by the titles of the books in which the poems appear and by the names of their publishers. All the poems in this Anthology are copyright, and the Editor acknowledges with thanks the permission to use this copyright material which has been granted to him by the Authors or their representatives (or executors) and the Publishers as further detailed after each selection.

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INTRODUCTION

For several hundreds of years poetry in England has never stood still. At times one kind of poetry has held the field for many years, but it has never been an undisputed sway. While Spenser was summing up the essence of Elizabethan poetry in his *Faerie Queene*, the young Donne was already courting a very different Muse; while Pope dazzled the Augustans with his incomparable mastery, other, though lesser, poets turned to other tunes and other moods, and Pope was scarcely dead before it was disputed by some whether what he had written was poetry at all. The English Muse, indeed, has never been like the phoenix, for she has never become silent in the ashes of her self-consuming: rather, her immortality is the human immortality of rebirth through her rebellious children and the differences of their temperaments.

So it is impossible to generalise about the development of English poetry with any comfortable security. To talk of periods and tendencies is all very well, but *periods are rarely sharply defined and tendencies are* often obscurely complex, while exceptions to the generalisation do not by any means simply "prove the rule." Now that it is no longer the fashion to condemn the Victorians with that wholehearted zeal which alone produces carefree generalisation, it is the diversity within that vital and bustling age which most impresses us. The beginning of the end of the Victorian age is now discernible while that age was in its very prime. When *Tennyson's Idylls of the King* were all the rage in the drawing-rooms, Meredith said with grumpy scorn, "this stuff is not the Muse, it's Musery. The man has got hold of the Muse's

Dowson, Arthur Symons and Lionel Johnson, it was time for poetry to reject contemporary life and its problems, and, passing to fairyland or trivialities, to believe in the doctrine of art for art's sake: as Yeats said, "words alone are certain good." Tired of greatness and the urgent modern world, they made poetry in a corner, wasting a languid beauty of sound on a century-tired self-pity: as Dowson wrote, "with wine we dull our souls and careful strains of art," and Dowson was said to have remarked that "the letter *v* was the most beautiful of the letters, and could not be brought into verse too often."

But exhaustion characterised only the poetry of the "Nineties," not that of those ten years without any inverted commas. Nor was Yeats even then, with all his mournful faraway beauty, only tired of the passing world; he was also passionately seeking a new faith—"deprived by Huxley and Tyndall, whom I detested, of the simple-minded religion of my childhood, I had made a new religion, almost an infallible church, of poetic tradition, of a fardel of stories." And outside the Rhymers Club there was new life. A. E. Housman, indeed, was not altogether new: he shared in the self-pity of the "Nineties" and their despair, but there was strength in his bitterness and colour in his violence, which made him very acceptable to the young twenty years and more later. Hardy and Meredith, too, were poets of this time, Hardy growing steadily in poetic power, not without his share of disillusion, but with that in his soul that saw far beyond it. Bridges and Binyon were pursuing a poetic artistry that refreshed and extended traditional poetry. But Kipling broke into the Nineties with a new, and even vulgar, strength in his ballads of the men who march and fight. And while Kipling recalled how "'Omer smote 'is bloomin' lyre," H. G. Wells was writing his scientific romances, his eyes bright with

clothes line and hung it with jewellery," and it was Swinburne's quip to call the *Morte d'Arthur* the *Morte d'Albert*. While Victorian Sunday observance was the rule and much more than a social convention, Hardy's novels were inspired in part of their tragic vision by his sense of the decay of faith, just as Matthew Arnold, too, by Dover Beach heard the "melancholy, long, withdrawing roar" of the Sea of Faith. Early in the Victorian period Carlyle attacked its smug materialism, Ruskin took up the assault on its soulless economics, and then Morris fled from it to medievalism and Scandinavian myth: yet Carlyle, Ruskin and Morris were all true Victorians. In this healthy diversity and reaction were the seeds of the Twentieth century. Times were changing rapidly, and many minds changed with them. Hardy, born in 1840, was in 1873 writing poems which would be more in place in a "modern" than in a Victorian anthology. In fact, as the Victorian age wore on, there were three forces at work whereby, in Tennyson's phrasing, "the old order changeth, yielding place to new": first, the ferment born of changing conditions and changing minds; secondly, the reaction of the younger generations within it; and thirdly, exhaustion, if that can be called a force.

It is exhaustion, perhaps, that is one's first impression of the "Nineties." The young poets and aesthetes were so weary of the nobleness of the great Victorians that they found it no longer noble but only shoddy, and would no longer have poetry lecture men on conduct and preach to them about life. Their masters were Pater with his theory of style, and Swinburne with his appreciation of Baudelaire and Verlaine, not the Laureate Tennyson or the noisy giant Browning, whose lives had both just run out. To the poets of the Nineties as represented by the Rhymers Club, among whom were Yeats, Ernest

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the wonders of science. The century was certainly not whimpering to its end, when creative literature is viewed as a whole.

In the first ten or so years of the twentieth century, there were many new voices and a very considerable output of poetry. There was some carry-over from the "Nineties": Stephen Phillips, in his poetic plays, infused an Elizabethan richness into the theme of wine, women and song, and Lord Alfred Douglas developed into a great writer of sonnets. Hardy produced his great epic, *The Dynasts*. Bridges and Binyon maintained their high standards of artistry, accompanied now in their devotion to the age-long traditions of English poetry by Gordon Bottomley, Wilfrid Gibson, William Watson and Lascelles Abercrombie. Kipling exchanged the cruder vigour of his earlier journalistic verse for a more timeless expression of an English vision he loved in time past and present, calling for the preservation of values he foresaw to be threatened. Yeats in Ireland, drawn into political interests, developed away from the aesthetes—"surely," he said, "the idea of culture expressed by Pater can only create feminine souls." Yeats gave himself mainly in these years to the drama, but his relatively few lyrics, though still depressed in mood, began about 1910 to come with a fresh simplicity and realism, albeit combined with symbolism; and, when he was nearly fifty, his volume *Responsibilities* (1914) showed a new Yeats, throwing aside his old "coat covered with embroideries out of old mythologies" to "the fools," while he himself found "more enterprise in walking naked." In Ireland, indeed, there had been a great movement in literature, in which A. E. and J. M. Synge and others, as well as Yeats, played a notable part. England could show no real counterpart to this, but when, in addition to those already named, we remember Masefield,

G. K. Chesterton, Alfred Noyes and W. H. Davies, was no poor age of poetry.

Masefield, in particular, of the poets who appeared after 1900, was to become a very considerable poet in range and quality. He, like Kipling, and partly influenced by him, brought to poetry a broad humanity: as his "Consecration" to *Salt Water Ballads* (1902) declared, not for him the princes and prelates, but "the ranker, the tramp of the road . . . the sailor, the stoker of steamers . . . the dust and scum of the earth!" He began with songs and ballads of sailors and the sea, and of the countryside and the roads of England, and his call to the new century was to "laugh and be proud to belong to the old proud pageant of man." His *Everlasting Mercy* (1911) shocked many at first by its sometimes crudely melodramatic presentation of the drunken bruiser, Saul Kane, but this and the succeeding tales showed a poet who could tell a tale as well as Chaucer or Dryden, and appeal to the universal passions like Shakespeare. As often with the greater poets, it is by the broad effect of his work as a whole, not so much by short poems or concentrated felicities, that Masefield holds us, though many of his lyrics are of lasting stuff. He loved life, and the life he knew he understood, and his poetry gave back his knowledge with that broad mixture of beauty and ugliness, which makes a poet read by the many rather than the few. It is significant that he was a friend of the Irishman, J. M. Synge, who said in 1908 that "it may almost be said that before verse can be human again it must learn to be brutal."

About 1912 some of the young poets became self-conscious, and formed a group called the Georgians. Mr. (later Sir) Edward Marsh made a selection from their work and produced *Georgian Poetry* (1912), and four subsequent volumes appeared at irregular

intervals, the last covering the years 1920 to 1922. Among these young poets were Rupert Brooke, Drinkwater, Flecker, Freeman, Shanks, J. C. Squire, who took over the leadership in the later years, and Blunden, who came in towards the end, while W. H. Davies, De la Mare and Gordon Bottomley were among rather older poets who contributed a few poems. Georgian poetry was to be beautiful, natural and healthy—not Tennysonian, but modern, yet with no "modern" disease of extravagance, or obscurity or decadence, or crude realism. It succeeded within its limits, giving many charmingly quiet poems of the English countryside, often flooded in moonlight, but its limitations were considerable. The modern industrial world of 1912 with all its urgent problems was not in the vision of these poets; nor was the outside world, already so close to the disaster of the first World War. Their thoughts were untroubled by the eternal mysteries of the universe, or the darkening skies of their own transient days. Their pulses beat too quietly, and their nerves were unexcited. Nor did the war appreciably change them as poets.

But around 1912 poetic change was in the air, though the Georgians were largely insensitive to it. T. E. Hulme was talking brilliantly and lecturing about poetry. He hated vague poetic raptures about the soul, and he disclaimed "reverence for tradition." He wanted clear and accurate description, new poetic images, and, above all, new rhythms. He held that poetry came to a rebirth by the discovery of a new poetic form, which harmonised with the changed outlook of an age, and in French *vers libre* he discerned a medium apt to the new "tentative and half-shy manner of looking at things," when "philosophers no longer believe in absolute truth." He wrote few poems himself, and he was killed in Belgium in 1917, but he was a portent of the change to come.

Both in England and America there was a group known as the Imagists, whose views resembled Hulme's. H. D. was prominent among them, and Ezra Pound closely associated. Pound defined an image as "that which represents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time"; and the image was to be both new and clearly seen. The Imagists sought, too, new rhythms: "to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in the sequence of the metronome." Edwin Muir says: "the aim of Imagism was really to simplify the art of poetry by removing unnecessary rules and a burdensome mass of dead associations." The movement did not last long, but it played its part in the poetry to come.

The first World War did not affect the development of poetry vitally, except in the work of Wilfred Owen. Rupert Brooke and Freeman and Masefield hailed its onset with a sure patriotism, which Binyon held to the end. Robert Nichols experimented in impressionistic verse to render the realities of the modern war of machines. Many poets expressed from France their love and longing for the English countryside and all that home meant to them. In the later years the service poets, disillusioned by the boredom and horror of war, passed to satire, and even to pacifism. Blunden observed all he took part in, and the war entered into him, but it made no immediate difference to his poetic quality or technique. Sassoon, obsessed by the waste and agony, reacted the most creatively, and he influenced Wilfred Owen.

Owen had been experimenting in verse before the war, but his spirit was schooled then in the romanticism of Keats, Shelley and Tennyson. In the war his spirit took on the maturity born of bitter experience on the battlefields of France, and his poetry that lives began in 1917, when he spoke of "my recent efforts in Sassoon's manner." His short prefatory notes to

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Day Lewis puts, too, among the " ancestors " of modern poetry the Victorian Gerard Manley Hopkins, whose work Bridges at last gave to the world in 1918. He had chosen the moment for this exciting revelation with inspired judgment. Here was a vividly original poet, strong in passion and in intellect, and palpably sincere. He seemed, in the blaze of his sudden issuing forth, a royal eagle among the hooded owls of his poetic contemporaries. It did not matter that, as a Jesuit priest, his outlook might be antipathetic to many of that post-war generation, for he had so much that triumphed over any antipathy—his sincerity was a passport, his senses were intensely alive, he fiercely disliked the industrial age, he was distinctive and had sought what was distinctive in things. Above all, there was his technique: his sprung rhythm, internal rhyme, alliteration, consonant play, assonance, new compound epithets, bold freedom with grammar, all serving inseparably a fine brain and feeling soul,

were an inspiration to those who felt his revolutionary power in a changing world.

So we come to modern poetry. "To circumscribe poetry with a definition," said Dr. Johnson, "is the pedantry of a narrow mind." To define modern poetry would be to step in where T. S. Eliot has feared to tread. We have seen some of the factors in its growth. To these might be added other influences, such as that of the French symbolists, going back to Edgar Allan Poe, and the renewed appreciation of the English metaphysicals like Donne. But influences are very partial explanations. We must first know what is being influenced, namely the minds of the poets, and indeed the mind of a whole age of overlapping generations. Posterity may or may not sort out the truth of that. The disillusionment of the post-war world is obvious, the breakdown of the old values, the fever and the stress, the contempt for the old in the uncertain pride of an emancipated youth. What is reasonably clear is that it was a difficult time for poetry, and that T. S. Eliot spoke truly in 1921: "We can only say that it appears likely that poets in our civilisation, as it exists at present, must be difficult. Our civilisation comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results."

This complexity stares one in the face. The limited Georgian vision had gone, and now poets saw the whole world, not only the present world from East to West and North to South, with its international and industrial problems, but the archeological and biological past, and the new physics, the new psychology, the new politics. It is not to be wondered at that, facing this complex reality, the world, and the poets especially, experienced an acute intellectual and nervous tension: the growing consciousness

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This complexity stares one in the face. The limited Georgian vision had gone, and now poets saw the whole world, not only the present world from East to West and North to South, with its international and industrial problems, but the archeological and biological past, and the new physics, the new psychology, the new politics. It is not to be wondered at that, facing this complex reality, the world, and the poets especially, experienced an acute intellectual and nervous tension: the growing consciousness

with a lyrical perfection. All the time he was himself seeking foundations for his own personal life, and, as *Ash Wednesday* testified, he found it in the Catholic faith: in religion, not in politics, he saw the solution of the world's distress. His later poetry, as in *Four Quartets*, while not losing entirely the satiric note, has brooded on the mystery of time and eternity, with a depth of contemplation, out of which in certain of the movements his pure, rather sad, lyricism issues in sweet beauty. That in the twenties his verse was often very "difficult" was no doubt due to the reasons he himself expressed, as quoted above; his later "difficulty" is due more to the theme than to the spirit or the technique.

When Eliot was writing his satires, Yeats, now approaching sixty, was writing his greatest poetry, noting like Eliot a half-dead world where "the best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity." Proud fusion of the aristocrat and the peasant, he scorned the commonness of the new age, now mocked at wisdom, and now distilled his rare learning, now yearned for life with all its folly, now sought refuge in the eternity of art, and all the time stamped his work with the mark of greatness. Thomas Hardy, too, now over eighty, published in 1922 *Later Lyrics and Earlier*, with a preface dark with a sense that "men's minds appear . . . to be moving backwards rather than on."

But new poets were speaking too. Edith Sitwell, while she as well felt the malaise of the day, which she interpreted through a world of clowns and paper houses and tinsel scenery, was an artist in the very fibre of her being, and an artist determined in revolt. She and her brothers were perhaps outrageous in their reaction from the Georgians, but they had to fight, and they loved fighting, and they won. Osbert Sitwell in 1921 declared "a poem need not have a message, or a story,

or a philosophy any more than a bun need have currants," but neither he nor Edith Sitwell, with all her experiments born in part of the Russian ballet and in part of jazz and also of a realisation of the possibilities of sense transference in poetic expression, wrote without something to say or objects to hit. Both drew the best from the old world of beauty and ceremony that was passing, while satirising, Osbert particularly, both that and the way the new world was going. Edith Sitwell's *Gold Coast Customs* (1929) is, indeed, her version of Eliot's *Waste Land* theme. And as the years have passed, the fundamental humanity of Edith Sitwell's poetry has appeared as manifestly as her artistry. The younger brother, Sacheverell Sitwell, with less of the intensity of genius, has also laid all lovers of poetry under a great debt for the continuous rich beauty of his poetry.

But it would take long to enumerate all the poetry of the nineteen-twenties. The old was by no means eclipsed by the fever and strangeness and accomplishment of the new. While the new poetry paraded its disillusionment, the older poets rather hid theirs, or were disillusioned by the new rather than by their own older world, and fell back quietly upon their art. De la Mare continued to sing incomparably. Gibson pursued his quiet course; so did Gordon Bottomley, remarking in 1924: "as the generations go by and the field of English poetry is more and more thoroughly worked, the possibility of lasting achievement in it becomes more difficult than ever. But the practice of that great art and the acceptance of its fruitful traditions has still other uses: to add a page or a phrase to the national achievement is worth a lifetime of its pursuit, but even to continue its living practice in a time of recession is to partake in its next blossoming." Victoria Sackville-West in *The Land*, Binyon in his odes, Noyes and Masefield held on the traditional

way. Of the younger poets, Blunden and Robert Graves worked on to fuller self-realisation. The young South African Roy Campbell set about the Georgians with boisterous satire, and blazed with an exuberant energy and passion at times almost barbaric.

The "next blossoming" of poetry, whether great or not, and whether or not it was in the eyes of traditionalists like Gordon Bottomley a desirable blossoming, began about 1930. Four young poets in particular stood out, Auden, Day Lewis, Stephen Spender and Macneice, all of whom had taken part in editing volumes of Oxford Poetry. Here was again a new poetry, but by no means unindebted to the traditions of English poetry. It was greatly influenced by T. S. Eliot, in whose own work was a complexity of living poetic tradition, but it drew largely, too, from Hopkins and Owen, and Auden took suggestions from many places, such as the sixteenth century poet Skelton, and even from pre-Conquest verse. But the attitude to life of these new poets was not Eliot's attitude. Their solution was not his religious solution, but a political and psychological one, and in his later verse he seemed to them rather a "lost leader." The despairful disillusionment of the twenties was gone, but they were in no mood for a stability based on Catholic principles: thrusting forward with a new confidence, they aggressively attacked the drifting chaos that survived from the old world, and optimistically thought that their poetry might play a large part in a necessary social and political regeneration. Though they came themselves from the professional middle classes—Auden's father was a doctor, Spender's a journalist, Day Lewis's a clergyman—they warmly espoused the cause of the "proletariat" and claimed to be their comrades. Auden himself hardly knew whether Karl Marx or the psychologists, Freud and Homer Lane, were the better doctors for the sick world.

Auden and Spender both published volumes of poetry in 1930, but it was *New Signatures* (1932) that, like *Georgian Poetry* twenty years before, made the public aware of the new poetry. In this Michael Roberts introduced a group of poets all under thirty-five years old, bringing out in his preface the poetic outlook and manner they shared in common, and making a confident claim for their hearing. *New Country* (1933), again introduced by Michael Roberts, repeated this mass attack, stressing particularly the common political attitude of the group. When the *Faber Book of Modern Verse* appeared in 1936 the new poetry was well known, and its chief protagonists were seen clearly in their separate individualities.

Auden was quickly recognised by his fellows as their leader. He reacted widely and sensitively to ideas and styles, and by incorporating in his verse so much that was experimentally stimulating he provided a treasury on which all who would could draw. So far his poetry has had three periods: at first, he was very young—with a half-fearful, half-gleeful anticipation of revolution he indulged in imagery of preparations for armed revolt, with spies and secret conspiracies and the crossing of frontiers, while, alternately, he boisterously menaced "the enemy." The sick world really must be cured, and he thought he knew how. It was an hour of decision:

> "If we really want to live, we'd better start at once
> to try;
> If we don't, it doesn't matter, but we'd better
> start to die."

When five years had passed, *Look, Stranger!* showed youth come to a fairly sure maturity. More confident in himself, and with less of the feeling that poets like him were speaking only to a small group of intimates

in a kind of secret conspiracy, he expressed, with surer technique, a growing confidence and hope, even, in his doctrine of love, almost forgiving "the enemy," and confident enough to become more really personal in his speech. The derelict contemporary land was sinking before a vision of a new dream world, though a world not to be achieved without perhaps the imposition of a "military silence" and the pain a surgeon must inflict on his patient. At times in a lyric beauty all his own he sang of spontaneous living, with notes of a transparent loveliness and colour. In *Another Time* (1940) he grew deeper in his analysis, more concentrated and objective, expressing himself through outside persons and things. But by then the second World War had come, and his Muse went into retreat, still mastering technique, but with defeat and isolation again apparent as he became somewhat vaguely mystical about love and more obscure in his expression. In America he had missed the Battle of Britain.

Day Lewis, Stephen Spender and Macneice were the other poets who most stood out from those who appeared about 1930. Since then all three have continued to produce fine work, growing in poetic stature, yet never quite fulfilling all the promise their early work seemed to hold. Lewis had something of Meredith in him, a love of earth, a desire to integrate blood and brain in a steel-like unity of spirit, a courage to sing above the storm, to aspire in a thrill of song, and bid Death go back unfeared to where he belongs. He has shown a unique narrative power in poems like *A Time to Dance* and *Nabara*. He has sobered from the early years when, with Auden-like imagery of rebellion, blasting and frontier-crossing, he rapturously bade the comrades go forward, faces to the sun. It is significant that he became not a pacifist, but a Home Guard.

Stephen Spender, a more introspective poet than either Auden or Day Lewis, has always felt things more individually, and, despite his keen political interests, never sank the individual so much in the social group in his political thinking as did Auden. The tragedy of Spain hurt him deeply, and none since Owen has conveyed such a sense of the pity of war as he, and perhaps none has depicted so well the unhappiness of man's central decencies ground between the violence of political opposites as he did in his play *The Trial of a Judge*. Pity oddly jostled by violence, understanding coupled with sensuousness, realisation of the appeal of modern mechanical power alongside insistence on the inner life of the individual, these are some of Spender's leading characteristics. By the early years of the second War he had seen the error of poetry using itself for political ends, and in his book *Life and the Poet* he sought to unveil again the essential truth about poetry: "the poetic is that which delights in being for the sake of being. The poet is he who realises in his art his own being and the being of other lives and nature outside himself."

Macneice had never given himself to partisan politics. A scholar, caught like his fellows in the rushing rapids of the threatening years, he clung to no special creeds. A baffled, sentimental, satiric, Irish, Oxford, classicist, he has struggled for balance and kept it remarkably well, with a sense of humour. His *Autumn Journal* gave a most revealing picture of himself driving his various and conflicting selves in the growing dark after Munich. The years bring balance, but never in these years will the balance, for any of us, be held without constant struggle.

After this group of poets came another generation. In 1934 the young Celt Dylan Thomas emerged with a rich imagery much inspired by the Old Testament. Of such young poets Stephen Spender remarked:

in a kind of secret conspiracy, he expressed, with surer technique, a growing confidence and hope, even, in his doctrine of love, almost forgiving "the enemy," and confident enough to become more really personal in his speech. The derelict contemporary land was sinking before a vision of a new dream world, though a world not to be achieved without perhaps the imposition of a "military silence" and the pain a surgeon must inflict on his patient. At times in a lyric beauty all his own he sang of spontaneous living, with notes of a transparent loveliness and colour. In *Another Time* (1940) he grew deeper in his analysis, more concentrated and objective, expressing himself through outside persons and things. But by then the second World War had come, and his Muse went into retreat, still mastering technique, but with defeat and isolation again apparent as he became somewhat vaguely mystical about love and more obscure in his expression. In America he had missed the Battle of Britain.

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J. F. Hendry, and Christopher Hassall: the day of the dominance by intellectualism and pacifism was past. Indeed, a more purposeful and effective attitude had been evident for some time. Just before the war, Hendry and G. S. Fraser and Henry Treece had launched a movement they called the New Apocalypse, the aims of which were perhaps not very clear, but which was struggling towards a more positive attitude in literature. In the later thirties, too, Christopher Hassall had shown how, inspired by the eighteenth century poet George Crabbe, modern narrative poetry could be reborn, and his attitude was religious and positive. The religious note has continued to come back in poetry from poets like Gascoyne and Norman Nicholson.

Time will sift these poets of the war, and the years show their staying power. Their mood at first was rather melancholy: the editor of Faber's *Poetry in War Time* (1942) disclaimed responsibility for "the strain of sadness running throughout," for a true selection could not ignore it. Throughout, the boredom and waste oppressed the poets. Above all, there was the whole problem of evil, and at the end Sidney Keyes was confronting the enemy Death in his vital inner life, and his poems show how he had conquered it before death was his in fact. There was courageous facing of all the reality by poet after poet, rising at times to the clarion challenge of a poem like Hendry's *Churchillian Ode*, "a hymn of embattled fury and anthems of fortitude." One young poet, Richard Spender, killed in action, went to war in a spirit like Rupert Brooke's, ready with joy to sacrifice "my proud young body . . . all my bright years," to "repay laughing blood with spilt." On such a note of confidence this summary, with all the omissions of its brevity, may well close.

DICKINSON

EMILY DICKINSON (1830–1886), whose grandfather founded Amherst College, came of an old-established Massachusetts family originally of Yorkshire origin. About 1855 she became a voluntary recluse in her home. Her poems, in which she expressed the drama of her inner life, appeared first in 1890, and only in 1928 was *Complete Poems* issued, followed by *Further Poems* (1929). Like that of Hopkins, her poetry therefore belongs, and not only by the chance of time, to this century.

I TASTE A LIQUOR

I taste a liquor never brewed,
From tankards scooped in pearl;
Not all the vats upon the Rhine
Yield such an alcohol!

Inebriate of air am I,
And debauchee of dew;
Reeling, through endless summer days,
From inns of molten blue.

When landlords turn the drunken bee
Out of the foxglove's door,
When butterflies renounce their drams,
I shall but drink the more!

Till seraphs swing their snowy hats,
And saints to windows run,
To see the little tippler
Leaning against the sun!

THE GRASS SO LITTLE HAS TO DO

The grass so little has to do,—
A sphere of simple green,
With only butterflies to brood,
And bees to entertain,

And stir all day to pretty tunes
The breezes fetch along,
And hold the sunshine in its lap
And bow to everything;

And thread the dews all night, like pearls,
And make itself so fine,—
A duchess were too common
For such a noticing.

And even when it dies, to pass
In odors so divine,
As lowly spices gone to sleep,
Or amulets of pine.

And then to dwell in sovereign barns,
And dream the days away,—
The grass so little has to do,
I wish I were a hay!

NO BRIGADIER

No brigadier throughout the year
So civic as the Jay.
A neighbor and a warrior too,
With shrill felicity

Pursuing winds that censure us
A February day,
The brother of the universe
Was never blown away.

The snow and he are intimate;
I've often seen them play
When heaven looked upon us all
With such severity,

I felt apology were due
To an insulted sky,
Whose pompous frown was nutriment
To their temerity.

The pillow of this daring head
Is pungent evergreens;
His larder—terse and militant—
Unknown, refreshing things;

His character a tonic,
His future a dispute;
Unfair an immortality
That leaves this neighbor out.

I HAVE ELECTED ONE

Of all the souls that stand create
I have elected one.
When sense from spirit files away,
And subterfuge is done;

When that which is and that which was
Apart, intrinsic, stand,
And this brief tragedy of flesh
Is shifted like a sand;

When figures show their royal front
And mists are carved away,—
Behold the atom I preferred
To all the lists of clay!

HEART NOT SO HEAVY AS MINE

Heart not so heavy as mine,
Wending late home,
As it passed my window
Whistled itself a tune,—

A careless snatch, a ballad,
A ditty of the street;
Yet to my irritated ear
An anodyne so sweet,

It was as if a bobolink,
Sauntering this way,
Carolled and mused and carolled,
Then bubbled slow away.

It was as if a chirping brook
Upon a toilsome way
Set bleeding feet to minuets
Without the knowing why.

To-morrow, night will come again,
Weary, perhaps, and sore.
Ah, bugle, by my window,
I pray you stroll *once more* !

LOVE LYRICS

I.

You left me, sweet, two legacies,—
A legacy of love
A Heavenly Father would content,
Had He the offer of;

You left me boundaries of pain
Capacious as the sea,
Between eternity and time,
Your consciousness and me.

II.

Alter ? When the hills do.
Falter ? When the sun
Question if his glory
Be the perfect one.

Surfeit ? When the daffodil
Doth of the dew:
Even as herself, O friend !
I will of you !

BECAUSE I COULD NOT STOP FOR DEATH

Because I could not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves
And Immortality.

We slowly drove, he knew no haste,
And I had put away
My labor, and my leisure too,
For his civility.

We passed the school where children played
At wrestling in a ring;
We passed the fields of gazing grain,
We passed the setting sun.

We paused before a house that seemed
A swelling of the ground;
The roof was scarcely visible,
The cornice but a mound.

Since then 'tis centuries; but each
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the horses' heads
Were toward eternity.

EXULTATION

Exultation is the going
Of an inland soul to sea,—
Past the houses, past the headlands,
Into deep eternity!

Bred as we, among the mountains,
Can the sailor understand
The divine intoxication
Of the first league out from land?

HARDY

Thomas Hardy (1840–1928), when he published his first novel, *Desperate Remedies*, in 1871, had already written some thirty poems, and while he wrote his novels he also wrote much poetry. After his last novel, *Jude the Obscure* (1896), he began to publish this poetry with *Wessex Poems* (1898); by 1922 he had produced a large body of lyric and narrative poetry, as well as his incomparable epic of the Napoleonic Wars, *The Dynasts* (1904–8).

DRUMMER HODGE

I.

They throw in Drummer Hodge, to rest
Uncoffined—just as found:
His landmark is a kopje-crest
That breaks the veldt around;
And foreign constellations west
Each night above his mound.

II.

Young Hodge the Drummer never knew—
Fresh from his Wessex home—
The meaning of the broad Karoo,
The Bush, the dusty loam,
And why uprose to nightly view
Strange stars amid the gloam.

III.

Yet portion of that unknown plain
Will Hodge for ever be;
His homely Northern breast and brain
Grow to some Southern tree,
And strange-eyed constellations reign
His stars eternally.

AN AUGUST MIDNIGHT

I.

A shaded lamp and a waving blind,
And the beat of a clock from a distant floor:
On this scene enter—winged, horned, and spined—
A longlegs, a moth, and a dumbledore;
While 'mid my page there idly stands
A sleepy fly, that rubs its hands . . .

II.

Thus meet we five, in this still place,
At this point of time, at this point in space.
—My guests besmear my new-penned line,
Or bang at the lamp and fall supine.
" God's humblest, they ! " I muse. Yet why ?
They know Earth-secrets that know not I.

SHE HEARS THE STORM

There was a time in former years—
While my roof-tree was his—
When I should have been distressed by fears
At such a night as this !

I should have murmured anxiously,
" The pricking rain strikes cold;
His road is bare of hedge or tree,
And he is getting old."

But now the fitful chimney-ro
The drone of Thorncombe
The Froom in flood upon t
The mud of Mellstock L

The candle slanting sooty wick'd,
  The thuds upon the thatch,
The eaves-drops on the window flicked,
  The clacking garden-hatch,

And what they mean to wayfarers,
  I scarcely heed or mind;
He has won that storm-tight roof of hers
  Which Earth grants all her kind.

BEENY CLIFF

March 1870–*March* 1913

I.

O the opal and the sapphire of that wandering western sea,
And the woman riding high above with bright hair flapping free—
The woman whom I loved so, and who loyally loved me.

II.

The pale mews plained below us, and the waves seemed far away
In a nether sky, engrossed in saying their ceaseless babbling say,
As we laughed light-heartedly aloft on that clear-sunned March day.

III.

A little cloud then cloaked us, and there flew an irised rain,
And the Atlantic dyed its levels with a dull misfeatured stain,
And then the sun burst out again, and purples prinked the main.

IV.

—Still in all its chasmal beauty bulks old Beeny to
the sky,
And shall she and I not go there once again now
March is nigh,
And the sweet things said in that March say anew
there by and by?

V.

What if still in chasmal beauty looms that wild weird
western shore,
The woman now is—elsewhere—whom the ambling
pony bore,
And nor knows nor cares for Beeny, and will laugh
there nevermore.

TRANSFORMATIONS

Portion of this yew
Is a man my grandsire knew,
Bosomed here at its foot:
This branch may be his wife,
A ruddy human life
Now turned to a green shoot.

These grasses must be made
Of her who often prayed,
Last century, for repose;
And the fair girl long ago
Whom I often tried to know
May be entering this rose.

So, they are not underground,
But as nerves and veins abound
In the growths of upper air,
And they feel the sun and rain,
And the energy again
That made them what they were!

SNOW IN THE SUBURBS

Every branch big with it,
Bent every twig with it;
Every fork like a white web-foot;
Every street and pavement mute:
Some flakes have lost their way, and grope back
upward, when
Meeting those meandering down they turn and
descend again.
The palings are glued together like a wall,
And there is no waft of wind with the fleecy fall.

A sparrow enters the tree,
Whereon immediately
A snow-lump thrice his own slight size
Descends on him and showers his head and
eyes.
And overturns him,
And near inurns him,
And lights on a nether twig, when its brush
Starts off a volley of other lodging lumps with a rush.

The steps are a blanched slope,
Up which, with feeble hope,
A black cat comes, wide-eyed and thin;
And we take him in.

HOPKINS

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889) became a Jesuit priest in 1877; he called himself a Communist in 1871. His poems, mostly written after 1875, were first published in 1918 by Robert Bridges, to whose care Hopkins had entrusted them. A few years later, their power and technique considerably influenced the younger poets.

HEAVEN—HAVEN

A nun takes the veil

I have desired to go
Where springs not fail,
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail
And a few lilies blow.

And I have asked to be
Where no storms come,
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,
And out of the swing of the sea.

PIED BEAUTY

Glory be to God for dappled things—
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow and plough;
And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

GOD'S GRANDEUR

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
  It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
  It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
  And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
  And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
  There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
  Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
  World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

SONNET

The fine delight that fathers thought; the strong
Spur, live and lancing like the blowpipe flame,
Breathes once and, quenchèd faster than it came,
Leaves yet the mind a mother of immortal song.
Nine months she then, nay years, nine years she long
Within her wears, bears, cares and moulds the same:
The widow of an insight lost she lives, with aim
Now known and hand at work now never wrong.
  Sweet fire the sire of muse, my soul needs this;
I want the one rapture of an inspiration.
O then if in my lagging lines you miss
The roll, the rise, the carol, the creation,
My winter world, that scarcely breathes that bliss
Now, yields you, with some sighs, our explanatio

HURRAHING IN HARVEST

Summer ends now; now, barbarous in beauty, the
stooks arise
Around; up above, what wind-walks! what lovely
behaviour
Of silk-sack clouds! has wilder, wilful-wavier
Meal-drift moulded ever and melted across skies?

I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,
Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our
Saviour;
And, éyes, héart, what looks, what lips yet gave
you a
Rapturous love's greeting of realer, of rounder replies?

And the azurous hung hills are his world-wielding
shoulder
Majestic—as a stallion stalwart, very-violet-sweet!—
These things, these things were here and but the
beholder
Wanting; which two when they once meet,
The heart rears wings bold and bolder
And hurls for him, O half hurls earth for him off
under his feet.

BRIDGES

ROBERT BRIDGES (1844-1930) became Poet Laureate in 1913. His most productive years were between 1885 and 1916, and his work included, in addition to many lyrics of love and nature, long poems and poetic plays. He was a great master of prosody. *The Testament of Beauty* (1929) nobly states his faith.

I HEARD A LINNET COURTING

I heard a linnet courting
His lady in the spring:
His mates were idly sporting,
Nor stayed to hear him sing
His song of love.—
I fear my speech distorting
His tender love.

The phrases of his pleading
Were full of young delight;
And she that gave him heeding
Interpreted aright
His gay, sweet notes,—
So sadly marred in the reading,—
His tender notes.

And when he ceased, the hearer
Awaited the refrain,
Till swiftly perching nearer
He sang his song again,
His pretty song:—
Would that my verse spake clearer
His tender song!

Ye happy, airy creatures!
That in the merry spring
Think not of what misfeatures
Or cares the year may bring;
But unto love
Resign your simple natures,
To tender love.

HURRAHING IN HARVEST

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stooks arise
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AWAKE, MY HEART

Awake, my heart, to be loved, awake, awake!
The darkness silvers away, the morn doth break,
It leaps in the sky: unrisen lustres slake
The o'ertaken moon. Awake, O heart, awake!

She too that loveth awaketh and hopes for thee;
Her eyes already have sped the shades that flee,
Already they watch the path thy feet shall take:
Awake, O heart, to be loved, awake, awake!

And if thou tarry from her,—if this could be,—
She cometh herself, O heart, to be loved, to thee;
For thee would unashamèd herself forsake:
Awake to be loved, my heart, awake, awake!

Awake, the land is scattered with light, and see,
Uncanopied sleep is flying from field and tree:
And blossoming boughs of April in laughter shake;
Awake, O heart, to be loved, awake, awake!

Lo all things wake and tarry and look for thee:
She looketh and saith, "O sun, now bring him to me.
Come more adored, O adored, for his coming's sake,
And awake my heart to be loved: awake, awake!"

THE DOWNS

O bold majestic downs, smooth, fair and lonely;
O still solitude, only matched in the skies:
Perilous in steep places,
Soft in the level races,
Where sweeping in phantom silence the cloudland flies;
With lovely undulation of fall and rise;
Entrenched with thickets thorned,
By delicate miniature dainty flowers adorned!

I climb your crown, and lo! a sight surprising
Of sea in front uprising, steep and wide:
And scattered ships ascending
To heaven, lost in the blending
Of distant blues, where water and sky divide,
Urging their engines against wind and tide,
And all so small and slow
They seem to be wearily pointing the way they would go.

The accumulated murmur of soft plashing,
Of waves on rocks dashing and searching the sands,
Takes my ear, in the veering
Baffled wind, as rearing
Upright at the cliff, to the gullies and rifts he stands;
And his conquering surges scour out over the lands;
While again at the foot of the downs
He masses his strength to recover the topmost crowns.

MEYNELL

ALICE MEYNELL (1847–1922), wife of Wilfred Meynell, journalist, was a friend of the poet Coventry Patmore, and she and her husband befriended Francis Thompson. Her poetic output was not large—she was the mother of eight children—but she continued to write throughout her life from *Preludes* (1875) to *Poems on the War* (1915), and some of her best work is in *The Shepherdess and other Verses* (1914).

THE RAINY SUMMER

There's much afoot in heaven and earth this year;
  The winds hunt up the sun, hunt up the moon,
Trouble the dubious dawn, hasten the drear
  Height of a threatening noon.

No breath of boughs, no breath of leaves, of fronds,
  May linger or grow warm; the trees are loud;
The forest, rooted, tosses in her bonds,
  And strains against the cloud.

No scents may pause within the garden-fold;
  The rifled flowers are cold as ocean-shells;
Bees, humming in the storm, carry their cold
  Wild honey to cold cells.

THE UNKNOWN GOD

One of the crowd went up,
And knelt before the Paten and the Cup,
Received the Lord, returned in peace, and prayed
Close to my side. Then in my heart I said:

" O Christ, in this man's life—
This stranger who is Thine—in all his strife,
All his felicity, his good and ill,
In the assaulted stronghold of his will,

"I do confess Thee here,
Alive within this life; I know Thee near
Within this lonely conscience, closed away
Within this brother's solitary day.

"Christ in his unknown heart,
His intellect unknown—this love, this art,
This battle and this peace, this destiny
That I shall never know, look upon me!

"Christ in his numbered breath,
Christ in his beating heart and in his death,
Christ in his mystery! From that secret place
And from that separate dwelling, give me grace!"

IN MANCHESTER SQUARE

In Memoriam T.H.

The paralytic man has dropped in death
The crossing-sweeper's brush to which he clung,
One-handed, twisted, dwarfed, scanted of breath,
Although his hair was young.

I saw this year the winter vines of France,
Dwarfed, twisted goblins in the frosty drouth—
Gnarled, crippled, blackened little stems askance
On long hills to the South.

Great green and golden hands of leaves ere long
Shall proffer clusters in that vineyard wide.
And O his might, his sweet, his wine, his song,
His stature, since he died!

A THRUSH BEFORE DAWN

A voice peals in this end of night
A phrase of notes resembling stars,
Single and spiritual notes of light.
What call they at my window-bars?
The South, the past, the day to be,
An ancient infelicity.

Darkling, deliberate, what sings
This wonderful one, alone, at peace?
What wilder things than song, what things
Sweeter than youth, clearer than Greece,
Dearer than Italy, untold
Delight, and freshness centuries old?

And first first-loves, a multitude,
The exaltation of their pain;
Ancestral childhood long renewed;
And midnights of invisible rain;
And gardens, gardens, night and day,
Gardens and childhood all the way.

What Middle Ages passionate,
O passionless voice! What distant bells
Lodged in the hills, what palace state
Illyrian! For it speaks, it tells,
Without desire, without dismay,
Some morrow and some yesterday.

All-natural things! But more—Whence came
This yet remoter mystery?
How do these starry notes proclaim
A graver still divinity?
This hope, this sancity of fear?
O innocent throat! O human ear!

WATSON

SIR WILLIAM WATSON (1858–1935) published one of his finest poems, *Wordsworth's Grave*, in 1887, and after *Collected Poems* (1907) continued to publish, producing some five sonnets on the first World War. Perhaps because of its traditional virtues, his poetry tended to be overlooked.

THE WINTER SLEEP

A maiden o'erwearied
  With dance and song,
The Earth,
The Earth,
  The Earth sleeps long.

And her dreams are all
  Of one mad sweet thing—
The kisses,
The kisses,
  The kisses of Spring.

Awake, O maiden,
  For joy draws near.
Thy lover,
Thy lover,
  Thy lover is here.

KILLINEY STRAND

The sea before me
  Is harassed and stormy:
The low sky o'er me
  Is haggard and wan.
With gray tides foaming,
And drear winds roaming,
And tired gulls homing,
  Great Night comes on.

VOICE AND VISION

If I had never known your face at all,
Had only heard you speak, beyond thick screen
Of leaves, in an old garden, when the sheen
Of morning dwelt on dial and ivied wall,
I think your voice had been enough to call
Yourself before me, in living vision seen,
So pregnant with your Essence had it been,
So charged with You, in each soft rise and fall.

At least I know, that when upon the night
With chanted word your voice lets loose your soul,
I am stricken and pierced and cloven with Delight
That hath all Pain within it, and the whole
World's tears; all ecstasy of inward sight;
And the blind cry of all the seas that roll.

THE VISITOR ABHORRED

Unknowable Power is o'er me—
The might of unknowable Mind;
And fathomless Time is before me,
And fathomless Time is behind.

And I sit at the Feast of Illusion
In the Palace of Baffled Quest,
Awaiting the loathed intrusion
Of the silent Unbidden Guest,

Who passes the sleeping sentry,
And leaves him to slumber on—
And makes his triumphal entry,
And casts his dart, and is gone.

A. E. HOUSMAN

ALFRED EDWARD HOUSMAN (1859–1936) published only two slim volumes of poetry, *A Shropshire Lad* (1896) and *Last Poems* (1922). He was above all a scholar, and was Professor of Latin, first at University College, London, and then at Cambridge. His lecture, *The Name and Nature of Poetry* is a classic of a very personal quality.

REVEILLE

Wake: the silver dusk returning
Up the beach of darkness brims,
And the ship of sunrise burning
Strands upon the eastern rims.

Wake: the vaulted shadow shatters
Trampled to the floor it spanned
And the tent of night in tatters
Straws the sky-pavilioned land.

Up, lad, up, 'tis late for lying:
Hear the drums of morning play;
Hark, the empty highways crying
" Who'll beyond the hills away ?"

Towns and countries woo together,
Forelands beacon, belfries call;
Never lad that trod on leather
Lived to feast his heart with all.

Up, lad: thews that lie and cumber
Sunlit pallets never thrive;
Morns abed and daylight slumber
Were not meant for man alive.

Clay lies still, but blood's a rover;
Breath's a ware that will not keep.
Up, lad: when the journey's over
There'll be time enough to sleep.

The youth toward his fancy
  Would turn his brow of tan,
And Tom would pair with Nancy
  And Dick step off with Fan;
The girl would lift her glances
  To his, and both be mute:
Well went the dances
  At evening to the flute.

Wenlock Edge was umbered,
  And bright was Abdon Burf,
And warm between them slumbered
  The smooth green miles of turf;
Until from grass and clover
  The upshot beam would fade,
And England over
  Advanced the lofty shade.

The lofty shade advances,
  I fetch my flute and play:
Come, lads, and learn the dances
  And praise the tune to-day.
To-morrow, more's the pity,
  Away we both must hie,
To air the ditty,
  And to earth I.

EPITAPH ON AN ARMY OF MERCENARIES

These, in the day when heaven was falling,
  The hour when earth's foundations fled,
Followed their mercenary calling
  And took their wages and are dead.

Their shoulders held the sky suspended;
  They stood, and earth's foundations stay;
What God abandoned, these defended,
  And saved the sum of things for pay.

KIPLING

RUDYARD KIPLING (1865–1936), born in Bombay, was justly called in his prime "the Laureate of the Empire." He began as a journalist in verse and the short story, and soon showed that he was much more than only an entertainer. *Barrack Room Ballads* (1892) and *The Seven Seas* (1896) gained him immense popularity. He wrote poetry throughout his life. His short stories include *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888) and *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906). *Kim* (1901) is a great novel of India. *Stalky and Co.* (1899) is based on his own schooldays.

THE BALLAD OF THE "BOLIVAR"

1890

Seven men from all the world back to Docks again,
Rolling down the Ratcliffe Road drunk and raising Cain:
Give the girls another drink 'fore we sign away—
We that took the "Bolivar" out across the Bay!

We put out from Sunderland loaded down with rails;
  We put back to Sunderland 'cause our cargo shifted;
We put out from Sunderland—met the winter gales—
  Seven days and seven nights to the Start we drifted.

    Racketing her rivets loose, smoke-stack white as snow,
    All the coals adrift adeck, half the rails below,
    Leaking like a lobster-pot, steering like a dray—
    Out we took the "Bolivar," out across the Bay!

One by one the Lights came up, winked and let us by;
  Mile by mile we waddled on, coal and fo'c'sle short;
Met a blow that laid us down, heard a bulkhead fly;
  Left the "Wolf" behind us with a two-foot list to port.

    Trailing like a wounded duck, working out her soul;
    Clanging like a smithy-shop after every roll;
    Just a funnel and a mast lurching through the spray—
    So we threshed the "Bolivar" out across the Bay!

Felt her hog and felt her sag, betted when she'd break;
  Wondered every time she raced if she'd stand the shock;
Heard the seas like drunken men pounding at her strake;
  Hoped the Lord 'ud keep His thumb on the plummer-block.
    Banged against the iron decks, bilges choked with coal;
    Flayed and frozen foot and hand, sick of heart and soul;
    Last we prayed she'd buck herself into Judgment Day—
    Hi! we cursed the "Bolivar" knocking round the Bay!

O her nose flung up to sky, groaning to be still—
  Up and down and back we went, never time for breath;
Then the money paid at Lloyd's caught her by the heel,
  And the stars ran round and round dancin' at our death.
    Aching for an hour's sleep, dozing off between:
    Heard the rotten rivets draw when she took it green;
    Watched the compass chase its tail like a cat at play—
    That was on the "Bolivar," south across the Bay!

Once we saw between the squalls, lyin' head to swell—
  Mad with work and weariness, wishin' they was we—
Some damned Liner's lights go by like a grand hotel;
  Cheered her from the "Bolivar" swampin' in the sea.
    Then a greyback cleared us out, then the skipper laughed;
    "Boys, the wheel has gone to Hell—rig the winches aft!
    "Yoke the kicking rudder-head—get her under way!"
    So we steered her, pully-haul, out across the Bay!

Just a pack o' rotten plates puttied up with tar,
In we came, an' time enough, 'cross Bilbao Bar.
Overloaded, undermanned, meant to founder, we
Euchred God Almighty's storm, bluffed the Eternal Sea!
Seven men from all the world, back to town again,
Rollin' down the Ratcliffe Road drunk and raising Cain:
Seven men from out of Hell. Ain't the owners gay,
'Cause we took the "Bolivar" safe across the Bay?

THE CRAFTSMAN

Once, after long-drawn revel at The Mermaid,
He to the overbearing Boanerges
Jonson, uttered (If half of it were liquor,
Blessed be the vintage !)

Saying how, at an alehouse under Cotswold,
He had made sure of his very Cleopatra,
Drunk with enormous, salvation-contemning
Love for a tinker.

How, while he hid from Sir Thomas's keepers,
Crouched in a ditch and drenched by the midnight
Dews, he had listened to gipsy Juliet
Rail at the dawning.

How at Bankside, a boy drowning kittens
Winced at the business; whereupon his sister
(Lady Macbeth aged seven) thrust 'em under,
Sombrely scornful.

How on a Sabbath, hushed and compassionate—
She being known since her birth to the townsfolk-
Stratford dredged and delivered from Avon
Dripping Ophelia.

So, with a thin third finger marrying
Drop to wine-drop domed on the table,
Shakespeare opened his heart till the sunrise
Entered to hear him.

London wakened and he, imperturbable,
Passed from waking to hurry after shadows . .
Busied upon shows of no earthly importance ?
Yes, but he knew it !

"CITIES AND THRONES AND POWERS"

(*Prelude to "Puck of Pook's Hill"*)

Cities and Thrones and Powers
Stand in Time's eye,
Almost as long as flowers,
Which daily die:

But, as new buds put forth
To glad new men,
Out of the spent and unconsidered Earth
The Cities rise again.

This season's Daffodil,
She never hears,
What change, what chance, what chill,
Cut down last year's:
But with bold countenance,
And knowledge small,
Esteems her seven days' continuance
To be perpetual.

So Time that is o'er-kind
To all that be,
Ordains us e'en as blind,
As bold as she:
That in our very death,
And burial sure,
Shadow to shadow, well persuaded, saith,
"See how our works endure!"

PUCK'S SONG

See you the dimpled track that runs,
All hollow through the wheat?
O that was where they hauled the guns
That smote King Philip's fleet.

See you our little mill that clacks,
So busy by the brook?
She has ground her corn and paid her tax
Ever since Domesday Book.

See you our stilly woods of oak,
And the dread ditch beside?
O that was where the Saxons broke
On the day that Harold died.

See you the windy levels spread
About the gates of Rye?
O that was where the Northmen fled,
When Alfred's ships came by.

See you our pastures wide and lone,
Where the red oxen browse?
O there was a City thronged and known,
Ere London boasted a house.

And see you, after rain, the trace
Of mound and ditch and wall?
O that was a Legion's camping-place,
When Cæsar sailed from Gaul.

And see you marks that show and fade,
Like shadows on the Downs?
O they are the lines the Flint Men made,
To guard their wondrous towns.

Trackway and Camp and City lost,
Salt Marsh where now is corn;
Old Wars, old Peace, old Arts that cease,
And so was England born!

She is not any common Earth,
Water or wood or air,
But Merlin's Isle of Gramarye,
Where you and I will fare!

COLD IRON

"*Gold is for the mistress—silver for the maid—*
"*Copper for the craftsman cunning at his trade.*"
"Good!" said the Baron, sitting in his hall,
"But Iron—Cold Iron—is master of them all."

So he made rebellion 'gainst the King his liege,
Camped before his citadel and summoned it to siege.
"Nay!" said the cannoneer on the castle wall,
"But Iron—Cold Iron—shall be master of you all!"

Woe for the Baron and his knights so strong,
When the cruel cannon-balls laid 'em all along!
He was taken prisoner, he was cast in thrall,
And Iron—Cold Iron—was master of it all!

Yet his King spake kindly (Oh, how kind a Lord!)
"What if I release thee now and give thee back thy sword?"
"Nay!" said the Baron, "mock not at my fall.
For Iron—Cold Iron—is master of men all."

Tears are for the craven, prayers are for the clown—
Halters for the silly neck that cannot keep a crown."
As my loss is grievous, so my hope is small,
For Iron—Cold Iron—must be master of men all!"

Yet his King made answer (few such Kings there be!)
"Here is Bread and here is Wine—sit and sup with me.
Eat and drink in Mary's name, the whiles I do recall
How Iron—Cold Iron—can be master of men all!"

He took the Wine and blessed It. He blessed and brake the Bread,
With His own Hands He served Them, and presently He said:
"See! These Hands they pierced with nails, outside my city wall,
Show Iron—Cold Iron—to be master of men all!

"Wounds are for the desperate, blows are for the strong,
Balm and oil for weary hearts all cut and bruised with wrong.
I forgive thy treason—I redeem thy fall—
For Iron—Cold Iron—must be master of men all!"

"*Crowns are for the valiant—sceptres for the bold!*
Thrones and powers for mighty men who dare to take and hold."
"Nay!" said the Baron, kneeling in his hall,
"But Iron—Cold Iron—is master of men all!
Iron, out of Calvary, is master of men all!"

THE STORM CONE, 1932

This is the midnight—let no star
Delude us—dawn is very far.
This is the tempest long foretold—
Slow to make head but sure to hold.

Stand by! The lull 'twixt blast and blast
Signals the storm is near, not past;
And worse than present jeopardy
May our forlorn to-morrow be.

If we have cleared the expectant reef,
Let no man look for his relief.
Only the darkness hides the shape
Of further peril to escape.

It is decreed that we abide
The weight of gale against the tide
And those huge waves the outer main
Sends in to set us back again.

They fall and whelm. We strain to hear
The pulses of her labouring gear,
Till the *deep throb beneath us proves,*
After each shudder and check, she moves!

She moves, *with all save purpose lost,*
To make her offing from the coast;
But, till she fetches open sea
Let *no man deem that he is free!*

YEATS

William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) was the son of an Irish artist. He devoted his life to literature, and stood at the head of the Irish literary movement, his work being largely inspired by Irish legends and folklore. Politics also affected his life and his poetry, and he was a Senator of the Irish Free State, 1922-28. His poetry ranged from *Mosada* (1886) to *A Full Moon in March* (1935), and included such poetic plays as *The Countess Cathleen* (1892). In spirit he was a great aristocrat, but in spite of his dislike of democracy, science and " progress " his later poetry, in particular, won the admiration of the younger poets, as witness the elegies of W. H. Auden and Kenneth Allott. Among his prose writings are *Ideas of Good and Evil* (1903) and *Autobiographies* (1926).

TO A CHILD DANCING IN THE WIND

Dance there upon the shore;
What need have you to care
For wind or water's roar?
And tumble out your hair
That the salt drops have wet;
Being young you have not known
The fool's triumph, nor yet
Love lost as soon as won,
Nor the best labourer dead
And all the sheaves to bind.
What need have you to dread
The monstrous crying of wind?

THE INDIAN TO HIS LOVE

The island dreams under the dawn
And great boughs drop tranquillity;
The peahens dance on a smooth lawn,
A parrot sways upon a tree,
Raging at his own image in the enamelled sea.

Here we will moor our lonely ship
And wander ever with woven hands,
Murmuring softly lip to lip,
Along the grass, along the sands,
Murmuring how far away are the unquiet lands:

How we alone of mortals are
Hid under quiet boughs apart,
While our love grows an Indian star,
A meteor of the burning heart,
One with the tide that gleams, the wings that gleam
and dart,

The heavy boughs, the burnished dove
That moans and sighs a hundred days:
How when we die our shades will rove,
When eve has hushed the feathered ways,
With vapoury footsole by the water's drowsy blaze.

THE WILD SWANS AT COOLE

The trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky;
Upon the brimming water among the stones
Are nine-and-fifty swans.

The nineteenth autumn has come upon me
Since I first made my count;
I saw, before I had well finished,
All suddenly mount
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings
Upon their clamorous wings.

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,
And now my heart is sore.
All's changed since I, hearing at twilight,
The first time on this shore,
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,
Trod with a lighter tread.

Unwearied still, lover by lover,
They paddle in the cold
Companionable streams or climb the air;
Their hearts have not grown old;
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,
Attend upon them still.

But now they drift on the still water,
Mysterious, beautiful;
Among what rushes will they build,
By what lake's edge or pool
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day
To find they have flown away?

TO A YOUNG BEAUTY

Dear fellow-artist, why so free
With every sort of company,
With every Jack and Jill?
Choose your companions from the best;
Who draws a bucket with the rest
Soon topples down the hill.

You may, that mirror for a school,
Be passionate, not bountiful
As common beauties may,
Who were not born to keep in trim
With old Ezekiel's cherubim
But those of Beauvarlet.

I know what wages beauty gives,
How hard a life her servant lives,
Yet praise the winters gone:
There is not a fool can call me friend,
And I may dine at journey's end
With Landor and with Donne.

SAILING TO BYZANTIUM

I.

That is no country for old men. The young
In one another's arms, birds in the trees,
—Those dying generations—at their song,
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unageing intellect.

II.

An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress,
Nor is there singing school but studying
*Monuments of its own magnificence;
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium.

III.

O sages standing in God's holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
And be the singing-masters of my soul.
Consume my heart away; sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal
It knows not what it is; and gather me
Into the artifice of eternity.

IV.

Once out of nature I shall never tak
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

"A. E."

"A.E." (GEORGE W. RUSSELL, 1867–1935) was a great force in the intellectual and artistic life of Ireland. With Yeats he played a leading part in the Irish literary renaissance, and had an active share in founding the Irish Theatre. His remarkable abilities made him not only poet but painter and politician: he was both a mystic and an economist. He edited *The Irish Statesman*, 1923–30.

RECONCILIATION

I begin through the grass once again to be bound to
the Lord;
I can see, through a face that has faded, the face full
of rest
Of the earth, of the mother, my heart with her heart
in accord,
As I lie 'mid the cool green tresses that mantle her
breast
I begin with the grass once again to be bound to the
Lord.

By the hand of a child I am led to the throne of the King
For a touch that now fevers me not is forgotten
and far,
And His infinite sceptred hands that sway us can bring
Me in dreams from the laugh of a child to the song
of a star.
On the laugh of a child I am borne to the joy of the King.

CARROWMORE

It's a lonely road through bogland to the lake at
Carrowmore,
And a sleeper there lies dreaming where the water
laps the shore;
Though the moth-wings of the twilight in their
purples are unfurled,
Yet his sleep is filled with music by the masters of
the world.

There's a hand is white as silver that is fondling with
his hair:
There are glimmering feet of sunshine that are dancing
by him there:
And half-open lips of faery that were dyed a faery red
In their revels where the Hazel Tree its holy clusters
shed.

"Come away," the red lips whisper, "all the world
is weary now;
'Tis the twilight of the ages and it's time to quit the
plough.
Oh, the very sunlight's weary ere it lightens up the
dew,
And its gold is changed and faded before it falls to you.

"Though your lover's heart be tender, a tenderer
heart is near.
What's the starlight in her glances when the stars are
shining clear?
Who would kiss the fading shadow when the flower-
face glows above?
'Tis the beauty of all Beauty that is calling for your love."

Oh, the great gates of the mountain have opened once again,
And the sound of song and dancing falls upon the ears of men,
And the Land of Youth lies gleaming, quick with rainbow light and mirth,
And the old enchantment lingers in the honey-heart of earth.

OUTCAST

Sometimes when alone
At the dark close of day,
Men meet an outlawed majesty
And hurry away.

They come to the lighted house;
They talk to their dear;
They crucify the mystery
With words of good cheer.

When love and life are over,
And flight's at an end,
On the outcast majesty
They lean as a friend.

BINYON

LAURENCE BINYON (1869–1943) wrote the imperishable lines "For the Fallen," some of which are engraved as a war memorial (1914–1918) on the front of the British Museum. Early volumes were *London Visions* (1895, 1898), later poems *The Sirens* (1924) and *The Idols* (1928), and his *Collected Poems* make a considerable body of true and noble poetry, but perhaps too restrained for the widest appeal. He was a high official at the British Museum, and an authority on art.

MILTON: AN ODE

Soul of England, dost thou sleep,
Lulled or dulled, thy mighty youth forgotten?
Of the world's wine hast thou drunk too deep?
Hast thou sown more than thy hands can reap?
Turn again thine ear
To that song severe
In thine hour of storm and war begotten!

Here in towered London's throng,
In her streets, with Time's new murmur seething,
Milton pacing mused his haughty song;
Here he sleeps out feud, fret, and wrong.
Nay, that spirit august
Tramples death's low dust,
Still for us is kindled, burning, breathing.

He, on whose earth-darkened sight
Rose horizons of the empyrean
And the ordered spheres' unhasting flight;
He who saw, where round the heart of Light
Seraphs ardent-eyed
Flamed in circle wide,
Quiring music of their solemn pæan,

When through space a trouble ran
(Like a flush on serene skies arisen)
That from this dim spot of earth began—
Rumour of the world's new marvel, Man,
From whose heart-beat sped
Hope, hazard, and dread
Past earth's borders to hell's fiery prison:

He who saw the Anarch's hate
Tower, winged for woe; the serpent charming
Eve in her imperilled bower; the Gate
Barred, and those two forms that desolate
Mid the radiant spheres
Wept first human tears;
Earlier war in heaven and angels arming:

He who, like his Samson, bowed,
Toiling, hardly-tasked and night-enfolded,
Steered his proud course to one purpose vowed,
As an eagle beats through hailing cloud
Strong-winged and alone,
Seeking skies unknown:
He whose verse, majestically moulded,

Moves like armed and bannered host
Streaming irresistible, or abounding
River in a land's remoteness lost,
Poured from solitary peaks of frost,
And far histories brings
Of old realms and kings,
With high fates of fallen Man resounding:

This is England's voice that rang
Over Europe; this the soul unshaken
That from darkness a great splendour sang,
Beauty mightier for the cost and pang;
Of our blood and name
Risen, our spirits to claim,
To enlarge, to summon, to awaken.

THE ANVIL

Burned from the ore's rejected dross
The iron whitens in the heat.
With plangent strokes of pain and loss
The hammers on the iron beat.
Searched by the fire, through death and dole
We feel the iron in our soul.

O dreadful Forge! if torn and bruised
The heart, more urgent comes our cry
Not to be spared but to be used,
Brain, sinew and spirit, before we die.
Beat out the iron, edge it keen,
And shape us to the end we mean!

THE WOOD'S ENTRY

So old is the wood, so old,
Old as Fear.
Wrinkled roots; great stems; hushed leaves;
No sound near.

Shadows retreat into shadow,
Deepening, crossed.
Burning light singles a low leaf, a bough,
Far within, lost.

WALNUT-LEAF SCENT

In the high leaves of a walnut,
On the very topmost boughs,
A boy that climbed the branching bole
His cradled limbs would house.

On the airy bed that rocked him
Long, idle hours he'd lie
Alone with white clouds sailing
The warm blue of the sky.

I remember not what his dreams were;
But the scent of a leaf's enough
To house me higher than those high boughs
In a youth he knew not of,

In a light that no day brings now
But none can spoil or smutch,
A magic that I felt not then
And only now I touch.

DAWN BY THE SEA

Beautiful, cold, freshness of light reveals
The black masts, mirrored with their shadowy spars,
The hill-gloom and the sleeping wharf, and steals
Up magical faint heights of fading stars.

I hear the waves, on the long shingle thrown,
Slowly draw backward, plunge, and never cease.
Against that sea-sound the earth-stillness lone
Builds vaster in the early light's increase.

O falling blind waves, in my heart you break;
Outcast and far from my own self I seem,
With alien sense in a strange air awake,
The body and projection of a dream.

Turn back, pale Dawn, or bring that light to me
Which yesterday was lost beyond the sea.

MASTERS

Edgar Lee Masters (*b.* 1869) was born at Garnett, Kansas. As a lad he tried journalism; then he became a lawyer, practising for many years in Chicago. His early poems attracted little notice, but he won wide popularity with *Spoon River Anthology* (1915), a series of epitaphs supposedly spoken by the former inhabitants of Spoon River, a small town in the Mid-West.

DAVIS MATLOCK

Suppose it is nothing but the hive:
That there are drones and workers
And queens, and nothing but storing honey—
(Material things as well as culture and wisdom)—
For the next generation, this generation never living,
Except as it swarms in the sun-light of youth,
Strengthening its wings on what has been gathered,
And tasting, on the way to the hive
From the clover field, the delicate spoil.
Suppose all this, and suppose the truth:
That the nature of man is greater
Than nature's need in the hive;
And you must bear the burden of life,
As well as the urge from your spirit's excess—
Well, I say to live it out like a god
Sure of immortal life, though you are in doubt,
Is the way to live it.
If that doesn't make God prou
Then God is nothing but gr
Or sleep is the golden goal.

LUCINDA MATLOCK

I went to the dances at Chandlerville,
And played snap-out at Winchester.
One time we changed partners,
Driving home in the moonlight of middle June,
And then I found Davis.
We were married and lived together for seventy years,
Enjoying, working, raising the twelve children,
Eight of whom we lost
Ere I had reached the age of sixty.
I spun, I wove, I kept the house, I nursed the sick,
I made the garden, and for holiday
Rambled over the fields where sang the larks,
And by Spoon River gathering many a shell,
And many a flower and medicinal weed—
Shouting to the wooded hills, singing to the green valleys.
At ninety-six I had lived enough, that is all,
And passed to a sweet repose.
What is this I hear of sorrow and weariness,
Anger, discontent and drooping hopes?
Degenerate sons and daughters,
Life is too strong for you—
It takes life to love Life.

ROBINSON

Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869–1935) was born in Maine, U.S.A., and educated at Harvard. His first volume of poems appeared in 1896, and his lifelong devotion to poetry produced a large body of verse which well repays reading, both his lyrics and his long poems like *Tristram* (1927). In 1932 Allen Tate, the American critic, called him " the most famous of living American poets." He was three times awarded the Pulitzer Prize for poetry.

CREDO

I cannot find my way: there is no star
In all the shrouded heavens anywhere;
And there is not a whisper in the air
Of any living voice but one so far
That I can hear it only as a bar
Of lost, imperial music, played when fair
And angel fingers wove, and unaware,
Dead leaves to garlands where no roses are.

No, there is not a glimmer, nor a call,
For one that welcomes, welcomes when he fears,
The black and awful chaos of the night;
For through it all—above, beyond it all—
I know the far-sent message of the years,
I feel the coming glory of the Light.

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LUKE HAVERGAL

Go to the western gate, Luke Havergal,
There where the vines cling crimson on the wall,
And in the twilight wait for what will come.
The leaves will whisper there of her, and some,
Like flying words, will strike you as they fall;
But go, and if you listen she will call.
Go to the western gate, Luke Havergal—
Luke Havergal.

No, there is not a dawn in eastern skies
To rift the fiery night that's in your eyes;
But there, where western glooms are gathering,
The dark will end the dark, if anything:
God slays Himself with every leaf that flies,
And hell is more than half of paradise.
No, there is not a dawn in eastern skies—
In eastern skies.

Out of a grave I come to tell you this,
Out of a grave I come to quench the kiss
That flames upon your forehead with a glow
That blinds you to the way that you must go.
Yes, there is yet one way to where she is,
Bitter, but one that faith may never miss.
Out of a grave I come to tell you this—
To tell you this.

There is the western gate, Luke Havergal,
There are the crimson leaves upon the wall.
Go, for the winds are tearing them away,—
Nor think to riddle the dead words they say,
Nor any more to feel them as they fall;
But go, and if you trust her she will call.
There is the western gate, Luke Havergal—
Luke Havergal.

UNCLE ANANIAS

His words were magic and his heart was true,
  And everywhere he wandered he was blessed.
Out of all ancient men my childhood knew
  I choose him and I mark him for the best.
Of all authoritative liars, too,
  I crown him loveliest.

How fondly I remember the delight
  That always glorified him in the spring;
The joyous courage and the benedight
  Profusion of his faith in everything!
He was a good old man, and it was right
  That he should have his fling.

And often, underneath the apple-trees,
  When we surprised him in the summer time,
With what superb magnificence and ease
  He sinned enough to make the day sublime!
And if he liked us there about his knees,
  Truly it was no crime.

All summer long we loved him for the same
  Perennial inspiration of his lies;
And when the russet wealth of autumn came,
  There flew but fairer visions to our eyes—
Multiple, tropical, winged with a feathery flame
  Like birds of paradise.

So to the sheltered end of many a year
  He charmed the seasons out with pageantry
Wearing upon his forehead, with no fear,
  The laurel of approved iniquity.
And every child who knew him, far or near,
  Did love him faithfully.

THE STORY OF THE ASHES AND THE FLAME

No matter why, nor whence, nor when she came,
There was her place. No matter what men said,
No matter what she was; living or dead,
Faithful or not, he loved her all the same.
The story was as old as human shame,
But ever since that lonely night she fled,
With books to blind him, he had only read
The story of the ashes and the flame.

There she was always coming pretty soon
To fool him back, with penitent scared eyes
That had in them the laughter of the moon
For baffled lovers, and to make him think—
Before she gave him time enough to wink—
Her kisses were the keys to Paradise.

DAVIES

W. H. DAVIES (1871–1940) was born in Monmouthshire of Welsh parents. He tells of his early life in his *Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* (1907). After his first volume, *The Soul's Destroyer* (1905), he wrote and published poetry almost continuously, together with some prose, such as *A Poet's Pilgrimage* (1918).

THE RAINBOW

Rainbows are lovely things:
  The bird, that shakes a cold, wet wing,
Chatters with ecstasy,
  But has no breath to sing:
No wonder, when the air
Has a double-rainbow there!

Look, there's a rainbow now!
  See how that lovely rainbow throws
Her jewelled arm around
  This world, when the rain goes!
And how I wish the rain
Would come again, and again!

THE KINGFISHER

It was the Rainbow gave thee birth,
  And left thee all her lovely hues;
And, as her mother's name was Tears,
  So runs it in my blood to choose
For haunts the lonely pools, and keep
In company with trees that weep.

Go you and, with such glorious hues,
  Live with proud Peacocks in green parks;
On lawns as smooth as shining glass,
  Let every feather show its marks;
Get thee on boughs and clap thy wings
Before the windows of proud kings.

Nay, lovely Bird, thou art not vain;
  Thou hast no proud, ambitious mind;
I also love a quiet place
  That's green, away from all mankind;
A lonely pool, and let a tree
Sigh with her bosom over me.

STARERS

The small birds peck at apples ripe,
  And twice as big as them in size;
The wind doth make the hedge's leaves
  Shiver with joy, until it dies.
Young Gossamer is in the field;
  He holds the flowers with silver line—
They nod their heads as horses should.
  And there are forty dappled kine
As fat as snails in deep, dark wells,
  And just as shiny too—as they
Lie in a green field, motionless,
  And everyone now stares my way.
I must become a starer too:
  I stare at them as urchins can
When seamen talk, or any child
  That sees by chance its first black man.
I stare at drops of rain that shine
  Like glow-worms, when the time is noon;
I stare at little stars in Heaven,
  That try to stare like the big Moon.

STRONG MOMENTS

Sometimes I hear fine ladies sing,
  Sometimes I smoke and drink with men;
Sometimes I play at games of cards—
  Judge me to be no strong man then.

The strongest moment of my life
  Is when I think about the poor;
When, like a spring that rain has fed,
  My pity rises more and more.

The flower that loves the warmth and light
  Has all its mornings bathed in dew;
My heart has moments wet with tears,
  My weakness is they are so few.

MAGPIES

I have an orchard near my house,
  Where poppies spread and corn has grown;
It is a holy place for weeds,
  Where seeds stay on and flower, till blown.
Into this orchard, wild and quiet,
  The Magpie comes, the Owl and Rook:
To see one Magpie is not well,
  But seeing two brings all good luck.
If Magpies think the same, and say,
  " Two humans bring good luck, not one "—
How they must cheer us, Love, together
  And tremble when I come alone !

NO PLACE OR TIME

This early childhood of the year,
  These days of dancing blood—
Is Spring the proper time for breath
  To be resigned for good?

When Summer's face is bright and clear,
  And all the trees are green—
Shall I believe the time has come
  To creep away unseen?

When Autumn shuffles leaves of gold,
  And deals them in one heap—
Must I agree that that's the hour
  For everlasting sleep?

And when the world is white with snow,
  With Winter in his prime—
I'll still maintain that Death's a fool,
  That knows no place or time.

THE GHOST

Seek not to know Love's full extent,
  For Death, not Life, must measure Love;
Not till one lover's dead and gone,
  Is Love made strong enough to prove.
What woman, with a ghostly lover,
  Can hold a mirror to her hair?
A man can tell his love with tears,
  When but a woman's ghost is there.
Our greatest meeting is to come,
  When either you or I are lost:
When one, being left alone in tears,
  Confesses to the other's ghost.

DE LA MARE

Walter de la Mare (*b.* 1873) has delighted the English world with his poetry, his short stories, his novels, and his creative anthologies since *The Listeners* appeared in 1912. His poems for children are among his purest poetry. *The Return* (1910) and *The Memoirs of a Midget* (1921) are notable among his long stories. *Come Hither* is one of several fascinating and unusual anthologies. In verse and prose alike his imagination plays hauntingly among the beauties and mysteries of life.

THE TRUANTS

Ere my heart beats too coldly and faintly
To remember sad things, yet be gay,
I would sing a brief song of the world's little children
Magic hath stolen away.

The primroses scattered by April,
The stars of the wide Milky Way,
Cannot outnumber the hosts of the children
Magic hath stolen away.

The buttercup green of the meadows,
The snow of the blossoming may,
Lovelier are not than the legions of children
Magic hath stolen away.

The waves tossing surf in the moonbeam,
The Albatross lone on the spray,
Alone know the tears wept in vain for the children
Magic hath stolen away.

In vain: for at hush of the evening,
When the stars twinkle into the grey,
Seems to echo the far-away calling of children
Magic hath stolen away.

SALLIE

When Sallie with her pitcher goes
Down the long lane where the hawthorn blows
  For water from the spring,
I watch her bobbing sun-bright hair,
In the green leaves and blossoms there,
Shining and gleaming primrose-fair;
Till back again, like bird on wing,
Her pitcher, brimmed, she turns to bring—
  Oh, what a joy to see!
And her clear voice, the birds' above,
Rings sweet with joy, entranced with love—
  Ah! would 'twere love for me!

TITMOUSE

If you would happy company win,
Dangle a palm-nut from a tree,
Idly in green to sway and spin,
Its snow-pulped kernel for bait; and see
    A nimble titmouse enter in.

Out of earth's vast unknown of air,
Out of all summer, from wave to wave,
He'll perch, and prank his feathers fair,
Jangle a glass-clear wildering stave,
    And take his commons there—

This tiny son of life; this sprite,
By momentary Human sought,
Plume will his wing in the dappling light,
Clash timbrel shrill and gay—
And into Time's enormous Nought,
    Sweet-fed, will flit away.

POLONIUS

There haunts in Time's bare house an active ghost,
Enamoured of his name, Polonius.
He moves small fingers much, and all his speech
Is like a sampler of precisest words,
Set in the pattern of a simpleton.
His mirth floats eerily down chill corridors;
His sigh—it is a sound that loves a keyhole;
His tenderness a faint court-tarnished thing;
His wisdom prates as from a wicker cage;
His very belly is a pompous nought;
His eye a page that hath forgot his errand.
Yet in his bran—his spiritual bran—
Lies hid a child's demure, small, silver whistle
Which, to his horror, God blows, unawares,
And sets men staring. It is sad to think,
Might he but don indeed thin flesh and blood,
And pace important to Law's inmost room,
He would see, much marvelling, one immensely wise,
Named Bacon, who, at sound of his youth's step,
Would turn and call him Cousin—for the likeness.

THEY TOLD ME

They told me Pan was dead, but I
Oft marvelled who it was that sang
Down the green valleys languidly
Where the grey elder-thickets hang.

Sometimes I thought it was a bird
My soul had charged with sorcery;
Sometimes it seemed my own heart heard
Inland the sorrow of the sea.

But even where the primrose sets
The seal of her pale loveliness,
I found amid the violets
Tears of an antique bitterness.

SUNK LYONESSE

In sea-cold Lyonesse,
When the Sabbath eve shafts down
On the roofs, walls, belfries
Of the foundered town,
The Nereids pluck their lyres
Where the green translucency beats,
And with motionless eyes at gaze
Make minstrelsy in the streets.
And the ocean water stirs
In salt-worn casemate and porch.
Plies the blunt-snouted fish
With fire in his skull for torch.
And the ringing wires resound;
And the unearthly lovely weep,
In lament of the music they make
In the sullen courts of sleep:
Whose marble flowers bloom for aye:
And—lapped by the moon-guiled tide—
Mock their carver with heart of stone,
Caged in his stone-ribbed side.

THE QUIET ENEMY

Hearken! now the hermit bee
Drones a quiet threnody;
Greening on the stagnant pool
The criss-cross light slants silken-cool;
In the venomed yew tree wings
Preen and flit. The linnet sings.

Gradually the brave sun
Droops to a day's journey done;
In the marshy flats abide
Mists to muffle midnight-tide.
Puffed within the belfry tower
Hungry owls drowse out their hour. . . .

Walk in beauty. Vaunt thy rose.
Flaunt thy transient loveliness.
Pace for pace with thee there goes
A shape that hath not come to bless.
I thine enemy? . . . Nay, nay.
I can only watch and wait
Patient treacherous time away,
Hold ajar the wicket gate.

BOTTOMLEY

Gordon Bottomley (*b.* 1874) contributed to *Georgian Poetry* from 1912 to 1919. An early volume was *The Gate of Smaragdus* (1904), and he collected *Poems of Thirty Years* in 1925. Vice-President of the British Drama League, he has had a lifelong interest in the drama, and has himself written plays, as in *King Lear's Wife, and other Plays* (1915).

ATLANTIS

What poets sang in Atlantis? Who can tell
The epics of Atlantis or their names?
The sea hath its own murmurs, and sounds not
The secrets of its silences beneath,
And knows not any cadences enfolded
When the last bubbles of Atlantis broke
Among the quieting of its heaving floor.

O, years and tides and leagues and all their billows
Can alter not man's knowledge of men's hearts—
While trees and rocks and clouds include our being
We know the epics of Atlantis still:
A hero gave himself to lesser men,
Who first misunderstood and murdered him,
And then misunderstood and worshipped him;
A woman was lovely and men fought for her,
Towns burnt for her, and men put men in bondage,
But she put lengthier bondage on them all;
A wanderer toiled among all the isles
That fleck this turning star of shifting sea,
Or lonely purgatories of the mind,
In longing for his home or his lost love.

Poetry is founded on the hearts of men:
Though in Nirvana or the Heavenly courts
The principle of beauty shall persist,
Its body of poetry, as the body of man,
Is but a terrene form, a terrene use,
That swifter being will not loiter with;
And, when mankind is dead and the world cold,
Poetry's immortality will pass.

PROLOGUE FOR THE SILVERDALE VILLAGE PLAYERS

Easter, 1922

Neighbours and friends, we come to-night
To tell a tale and shew a sight
That never since our Silverdale
Was first built up among the pale
Old rocks and woods of oak and fir
And heaths of gorse and juniper,
Nor since the sea first left the land
Then took it back with the other hand,
Has been attempted here as now
We have a mind to try and shew.

We call ourselves the Village Players,
And acting is our game—like theirs
Who, half a thousand years ago,
Before the towns began to grow,
Kept the high feasts of their own places
With plays and dances, painted faces
And lovely clothes and lively tunes

And hearts as eager and light as June's
With all the quiver of *Springtime* in it
And Summer coming every minute.
The world has changed too much since then,
But, if we like, we later men
Can do as much as anyone
Who ever drew from wind and sun,
From earth and heaven, such life as ours.
We never half explore our powers
Of joy, discovery and delight,
We never get the good we might
Out of our spell of being alive:
It does not matter how much we thrive
If, when there are no more days to live,
Beauty has something still to give.

Beauty of colours and shapes and sounds
And words—by these our life abounds
In things worth having, and there's no way
Of getting them that beats a play,
And all the better we shall get them
If for ourselves we try to net them,
And play ourselves instead of paying
Other folk to do our playing
As townsfolk do, and spread the tale
Of Silverdale folk for Silverdale.

So listen well to us to-night,
And if we do not do it right
Be judges moved to lenience;
Remember 'tis our first offence,
And bind us over to appear
Before you all another year.

BABYLONIAN LYRIC

Nimroud was a hunter, striding
A belated mastodon;
Forests where he took his riding
Lay like corn when night came on.

Nimroud slid beneath the table
After seven vats of drink:
When he rose he builded Babel
Tottering on heaven's brink.

Babel fell in storm, but Nimroud
Went to sleep among his vats,
Where his body hid a dim rood,
Drawing down a plague of gnats.

By his elemental snoring
Baffled gnats swirled in his nose;
Thick ones up his brain crept boring,
Where their bodies swelled and rose.

Such his pain and such his clamour
That an Ethiop grey from fears
With a giant's wooden hammer
Beat his head four hundred years.

On his eagle's-breast-filled pallet
Nimroud swore that he was god
('Twixt the wearings of the mallet)
Tressed with life, with deep death shod.

CHESTERTON

GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON (1874-1936) was poet, novelist, essayist, journalist and critic. His genius had the unusual combination of robustness and whimsicality, and both sides appear in his poetry, though on the whole, he found fullest expression in prose. The fantastic novel *The Man who was Thursday* is typical of his unusual imaginative treatment of ideas; his Father Brown stories are classics of their kind; his criticism of Browning and Dickens is rich in appreciative power. The whole man is to be found in his *Autobiography* (1937).

THE SONG OF THE CHILDREN

The world is ours till sunset,
  Holly and fire and snow;
And the name of our dead brother
  Who loved us long ago.

The grown folk mighty and cunning,
  They write his name in gold;
But we can tell a little
  Of the million tales he told.

He taught them laws and watchwords,
  To preach and struggle and pray;
But he taught us deep in the hayfield
  The games that the angels play.

Had he stayed here for ever,
  Their world would be wise as ours—
And the king be cutting capers,
  And the priest be picking flowers.

But the dark day came: they gathered:
  On their faces we could see
They had taken and slain our brother,
  And hanged him on a tree.

THE FISH

Dark the sea was: but I saw him,
One great head with goggle eyes,
Like a diabolic cherub
Flying in those fallen skies.

I have heard the hoarse deniers,
I have known the wordy wars;
I have seen a man, by shouting,
Seek to orphan all the stars.

I have seen a fool half-fashioned
Borrow from the heavens a tongue,
So to curse them more at leisure—
—And I trod him not as dung.

For I saw that finny goblin
Hidden in the abyss untrod;
And I knew there can be laughter
On the secret face of God.

Blow the trumpets, crown the sages,
Bring the age by reason fed!
(" He that sitteth in the heavens,
He shall laugh "—the prophet said.)

THE PRAISE OF DUST

"What of vile dust?" the preacher said.
  Methought the whole world woke,
The dead stone lived beneath my foot,
  And my whole body spoke.

"You, that play tyrant to the dust,
  And stamp its wrinkled face,
This patient star that flings you not
  Far into homeless space,

"Come down out of your dusty shrine
  The living dust to see,
The flowers that at your sermon's end
  Stand blazing silently.

"Rich white and blood-red blossom; stones,
  Lichens like fire encrust;
A gleam of blue, a glare of gold,
  The vision of the dust.

"Pass them all by: till, as you come
  Where, at the city's edge,
Under a tree—I know it well—
  Under a lattice ledge,

"The sunshine falls on one brown head.
  You, too, O cold of clay,
Eater of stones, may haply hear
  The trumpets of that day,

"When God to all his paladins
  By his own splendour swore
To make a fairer face than heaven,
  Of dust and nothing more."

FROST

Robert Lee Frost (*b.* 1875), who is an American has been teacher and farmer, sometimes concurrently He lived in England from 1912 to 1915, and his friendship with English poets is celebrated by Wilfric Gibson (see p. 94). His first volume of poetry *A Boy's Will* (1913), was published in England, as alsc was an excellent selection of his life's poetry, *Com In and Other Poems*, 1944.

DUST OF SNOW

The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree

Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.

THE ONSET

Always the same, when on a fated night
At last the gathered snow lets down as white
As may be in dark woods, and with a song
It shall not make again all winter long
Of hissing on the yet uncovered ground,
I almost stumble looking up and round,
As one who overtaken by the end
Gives up his errand, and lets death descend
Upon him where he is, with nothing done
To evil, no important triumph won,
More than if life had never been begun.

Yet all the precedent is on my side:
I know that winter death has never tried
The earth but it has failed: the snow may heap
In long storms an undrifted four feet deep
As measured against maple, birch and oak,
It cannot check the peeper's silver croak;
And I shall see the snow all go down hill
In water of a slender April rill
That flashes tail through last year's withered brake
And dead weeds, like a disappearing snake.
Nothing will be left white but here a birch,
And there a clump of houses with a church.

MOWING

There was never a sound beside the wood but one,
And that was my long scythe whispering to the ground.
What was it it whispered? I knew not well myself;
Perhaps it was something about the heat of the sun,
Something, perhaps, about the lack of sound—
And that was why it whispered and did not speak.
It was no dream of the gift of idle hours,
Or easy gold at the hand of fay or elf:
Anything more than the truth would have seemed too weak
To the earnest love that laid the swale in rows,
Not without feeble-pointed spikes of flowers
(Pale orchises), and scared a bright green snake.
The fact is the sweetest dream that labour knows.
My long scythe whispered and left the hay to make.

FROST

Robert Lee Frost (*b.* 1875), who is an America has been teacher and farmer, sometimes concurrent He lived in England from 1912 to 1915, and his frien ship with English poets is celebrated by Wilfi Gibson (see p. 94). His first volume of poet *A Boy's Will* (1913), was published in England, as al was an excellent selection of his life's poetry, *Co In and Other Poems*, 1944.

DUST OF SNOW

The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree

Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.

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Not without feeble-pointed spikes of flowers
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NEVER AGAIN WOULD BIRDS' SONG BE THE SAME

He would declare and could himself believe
That the birds there in all the garden round
From having heard the daylong voice of Eve
Had added to their own an oversound,
Her tone of meaning but without the words.
Admittedly an eloquence so soft
Could only have had an influence upon birds
When call or laughter carried it aloft.
Be that as may be, she was in their song.
Moreover, her voice upon their voices crossed
Had now persisted in the woods so long
That probably it never would be lost.
Never again would birds' song be the same.
And to do that to birds was why she came.

TREE AT MY WINDOW

Tree at my window, window tree,
My sash is lowered when night comes on;
But let there never be curtain drawn
Between you and me.

Vague dream-head lifted out of the ground,
And thing next most diffuse to cloud,
Not all your light tongues talking aloud
Could be profound.

But tree, I have seen you taken and tossed,
And if you have seen me when I slept,
You have seen me when I was taken and swept
And all but lost.

That day she put our heads together,
Fate had her imagination about her,
Your head so much concerned with outer,
Mine with inner, weather.

LOVE AND A QUESTION

A stranger came to the door at eve,
  And he spoke the bridegroom fair.
He bore a green-white stick in his hand,
  And, for all burden, care.
He asked with the eyes more than the lips
  For a shelter for the night,
And he turned and looked at the road afar
  Without a window light.

The bridegroom came forth into the porch
  With " Let us look at the sky,
And question what of the night to be,
  Stranger, you and I."
The woodbine leaves littered the yard,
  The woodbine berries were blue,
Autumn, yes, winter was in the wind;
  " Stranger, I wish I knew."

Within, the bride in the dusk alone
  Bent over the open fire,
Her face rose-red with the glowing coal
  And the thought of the heart's desire.
The bridegroom looked at the weary road,
  Yet saw but her within,
And wished her heart in a case of gold
  And pinned with a silver pin.

The bridegroom thought it little to give
  A dole of bread, a purse,
A heartfelt prayer for the poor of God,
  Or for the rich a curse;
But whether or not a man was asked
  To mar the love of two
By harbouring woe in the bridal house,
  The bridegroom wished he knew.

TWO LOOK AT TWO

Love and forgetting might have carried them
A little further up the mountain side
With night so near, but not much further up.
They must have halted soon in any case
With thoughts of the path back, how rough it was
With rock and washout, and unsafe in darkness;
When they were halted by a tumbled wall
With barbed-wire binding. They stood facing this,
Spending what onward impulse they still had
In one last look the way they must not go,
On up the failing path, where, if a stone
Or earthslide moved at night, it moved itself;
No footstep moved it. "This is all," they sighed,
"Good-night to woods." But not so; there was more.
A doe from round a spruce stood looking at them
Across the wall, as near the wall as they.
She saw them in their field, they her in hers.
The difficulty of seeing what stood still,
Like some up-ended boulder split in two,
Was in her clouded eyes: they saw no fear there.
She seemed to think that two thus they were safe.
Then, as if they were something that, though strange,
She could not trouble her mind with too long,
She sighed and passed unscared along the wall.
"*This*, then, is all. What more is there to ask?"
But no, not yet. A snort to bid them wait.
A buck from round the spruce stood looking at them
Across the wall as near the wall as they.
This was an antlered buck of lusty nostril,
Not the same doe come back into her place.
He viewed them quizzically with jerks of head,
As if to ask, "Why don't you make some motion?
Or give some sign of life? Because you can't.
I doubt if you're as living as you look."

Thus till he had them almost feeling dared
To stretch a proffering hand—and a spell-breaking.
Then he too passed unscared along the wall.
Two had seen two, whichever side you spoke from.
" This *must* be all." It was all. Still they stood,
A *great wave from it going over them,*
As if the earth in one unlooked-for favour
Had made them certain earth returned their love.

COME IN

As I came to the edge of the woods,
Thrush music—hark!
Now if it was dusk outside,
Inside it was dark.

Too dark in the woods for a bird
By sleight of wing
To better its perch for the night,
Though it still could sing.

The last of the light of the sun
That had died in the west
Still lived for one song more
In a thrush's breast.

Far in the pillared dark
Thrush music went—
Almost like a call to come in
To the dark and lament.

But no, I was out for stars:
I would not come in.
I meant not even if asked,
And I hadn't been.

GIBSON

WILFRID GIBSON (*b.* 1878) was born at Hexham, Northumberland. He has practised the art of poetry from his youth, and several volumes have followed *Collected Poems, 1905-1925*. *Krindlesyke* (1922) and *Kestrel Edge and Other Plays* are poetic dramas of Northumbria and the Borders. In *Solway Ford* (1945) he selects from his life's work.

THE GOLDEN ROOM

Do you remember that still summer evening
When, in the cosy cream-washed living-room
Of The Old Nailshop, we all talked and laughed—
Our neighbours from The Gallows, Catherine
And Lascelles Abercrombie; Rupert Brooke;
Elinor and Robert Frost, living a while
At Little Iddens, who'd brought over with them
Helen and Edward Thomas? In the lamplight
We talked and laughed; but, for the most part, listened
While Robert Frost kept on and on and on,
In his slow New England fashion, for our delight,
Holding us with shrewd turns and racy quips,
And the rare twinkle of his grave blue eyes?

We sat there in the lamplight, while the day
Died from rose-latticed casements, and the plovers
Called over the low meadows, till the owls
Answered them from the elms, we sat and talked—

Now, a quick flash from Abercrombie; now,
A murmured dry half-heard aside from Thomas;
Now, a clear laughing word from Brooke; and then
Again Frost's rich and ripe philosophy,
That had the body and tang of good draught-cider,
And poured as clear a stream.

'Twas in July
Of nineteen-fourteen that we sat and talked:
Then August brought the war, and scattered us.
Now, on the crest of an Aegean isle,
Brooke sleeps, and dreams of England: Thomas lies
'Neath Vimy Ridge, where he, among his fellows,
Died, just as life had touched his lips to song.

And nigh as ruthlessly has life divided
Us who survive; for Abercrombie toils
In a black Northern town, beneath the glower
Of hanging smoke; and in America
Frost farms once more; and, far from The Old Nailshop
We sojourn by the Western sea.

And yet,
Was it for nothing that the little room,
All golden in the lamplight, thrilled with golden
Laughter from hearts of friends that summer night?
Darkness has fallen on it; and the shadow
May never more be lifted from the hearts
That went through those black years of war, and live.

And still, whenever men and women gather
For talk and laughter on a summer night,
Shall not that lamp rekindle; and the room
Glow once again alive with light and laughter;
And, like a singing star in time's abyss,
Burn golden-hearted through oblivion?

MASEFIELD

JOHN MASEFIELD (*b.* 1878), born in Herefordshire, was apprenticed to a merchant ship when fourteen, and earned his living by various odd jobs in America before he published his first volume of poetry, *Salt-Water Ballads* (1902), which opens with the poem, "A Consecration." *The Everlasting Mercy* (1911) brought him wide recognition. His best poetry is probably contained in *Collected Poems* (1923), and he was appointed Poet Laureate in 1930. His plays include *The Tragedy of Nan* (1909), and his novels *Sard Harker* (1924), while his *William Shakespeare* (1911) is a most stimulating study.

A CONSECRATION

Not of the princes and prelates with periwigged charioteers
Riding triumphantly laurelled to lap the fat of the years,—
Rather the scorned—the rejected—the men hemmed in
with the spears;

The men of the tattered battalion which fights till it dies,
Dazed with the dust of the battle, the din and the cries,
The men with the broken heads and the blood running
into their eyes.

Not the be-medalled Commander, beloved of the throne,
Riding cock-horse to parade when the bugles are blown,
But the lads who carried the koppie and cannot be
known.

Not the ruler for me, but the ranker, the tramp of the
road,
The slave with the sack on his shoulders pricked on with
the goad,
The man with too weighty a burden, too weary a load.

The sailor, the stoker of steamers, the man with the clout,
The chantyman bent at the halliards putting a tune to the shout,
The drowsy man at the wheel and the tired look-out.

Others may sing of the wine and the wealth and the mirth,
The portly presence of potentates goodly in girth;—
Mine be the dirt and the dross, the dust and scum of the earth!

THEIRS be the music, the colour, the glory, the gold;
Mine be a handful of ashes, a mouthful of mould.
Of the maimed, of the halt and the blind in the rain and the cold—

Of these shall my songs be fashioned, my tales be told.
AMEN.

CARDIGAN BAY

Clean, green, windy billows notching out the sky,
Grey clouds tattered into rags, sea-winds blowing high,
And the ships under topsails, beating, thrashing by,
And the mewing of the herring gulls.

Dancing, flashing green seas shaking white locks,
Boiling in blind eddies over hidden rocks,
And the wind in the rigging, the creaking of the blocks,
And the straining of the timber hulls.

Delicate, cool sea-weeds, green and amber-brown,
In beds where shaken sunlight slowly filters down
On many a drowned seventy-four, many a sunken town,
And the whitening of the dead men's skulls.

THE TURN OF THE TIDE

An' Bill can have my sea-boots, Nigger Jim can have my
knife,
You can divvy up the dungarees an' bed,
An' the ship can have my blessing, an' the Lord can have
my life,
An' sails an' fish my body when I'm dead.

An' dreaming down below there in the tangled greens an'
blues,
Where the sunlight shudders golden round about,
I shall hear the ships complainin' an' the cursin' of the
crews,
An' be sorry when the watch is tumbled out.

I shall hear them hilly-hollying the weather crojick brace,
And the sucking of the wash about the hull;
When they chanty up the topsail I'll be hauling in my place,
For my soul will follow seawards like a gull.

I shall hear the blocks a-grunting in the bumpkins overside,
An' the slatting of the storm-sails on the stay,
An' the rippling of the catspaw at the making of the tide,
An' the swirl and splash of porpoises at play.

An' Bill can have my sea-boots, Nigger Jim can have my
knife,
You can divvy up the whack I haven't scofft,
An' the ship can have my blessing and the Lord can hav
my life,
For it's time I quit the deck and went aloft.

NIGHT IS ON THE DOWNLAND

Night is on the downland, on the lonely moorland,
On the hills where the wind goes over sheep-bitten turf,
Where the bent grass beats upon the unploughed
poorland
And the pine-woods roar like the surf.

Here the Roman lived on the wind-barren lonely,
Dark now and haunted by the moorland fowl;
None comes here now but the peewit only,
And moth-like death in the owl.

Beauty was here, on this beetle-droning downland;
The thought of a Cæsar in the purple came
From the palace by the Tiber in the Roman townland
To this wind-swept hill with no name.

Lonely Beauty came here and was here in sadness,
Brave as a thought on the frontier of the mind,
In the camp of the wild upon the march of madness,
The bright-eyed Queen of the Blind.

Now where Beauty was are the wind-withered gorses,
Moaning like old men in the hill-wind's blast;
The flying sky is dark with running horses,
And the night is full of the past.

FORGET

Forget all these, the barren fool in power,
The madman in command, the jealous O,
The bitter world biting its bitter hour,
The cruel now, the happy long ago.

Forget all these, for, though they truly hurt,
Even to the soul, they are not lasting things:
Men are no gods; we tread the city dirt,
But in our souls we can be queens and kings.

And I, O Beauty, O divine white wonder,
On whom my dull eyes, blind to all else, peer,
Have you for peace, that not the whole war's thunder,
Nor the world's wreck, can threat or take from here.

So you remain, though all man's passionate seas
Roar their blind tides, I can forget all these.

THOMAS

EDWARD THOMAS (1878–1917) first wrote poetry, at the suggestion of the American poet, Robert Frost, at the beginning of the war, in which he was killed in action in Flanders. De la Mare has written that with Thomas's death "a mirror of England was shattered of so pure and true a crystal that a clearer and tenderer reflection of it can be found no other where than in (his) poems." His prose work includes books and essays on the English countryside and studies of Richard Jefferies and George Borrow.

SOWING

It was a perfect day
For sowing; just
As sweet and dry was the ground
As tobacco-dust.

I tasted deep the hour
Between the far
Owl's chuckling first soft cry
And the first star.

A long stretched hour it was;
Nothing undone
Remained; the early seeds
All safely sown.

And now, hark at the rain,
Windless and light,
Half a kiss, half a tear,
Saying good-night.

TWO PEWITS

Under the after-sunset sky
Two pewits sport and cry,
More white than is the moon on high
Riding the dark surge silently;
More black than earth. Their cry
Is the one sound under the sky.
They alone move, now low, now high,
And merrily they cry
To the mischievous Spring sky,
Plunging earthward, tossing high,
Over the ghost who wonders why
So merrily they cry and fly,
Nor choose 'twixt earth and sky,
While the moon's quarter silently
Rides, and earth rests as silently.

WOMEN HE LIKED

Women he liked, did shovel-bearded Bob,
Old Farmer Hayward of the Heath, but he
Loved horses. He himself was like a cob,
And leather-coloured. Also he loved a tree.

For the life in them he loved most living things,
But a tree chiefly. All along the lane
He planted elms where now the stormcock sings
That travellers hear from the slow-climbing train.

Till then the track had never had a name
For all its thicket and the nightingales
That should have earned it. No one was to blame.
To name a thing beloved man sometimes fails.

Many years since, Bob Hayward died, and now
None passes there because the mist and the rain
Out of the elms have turned the lane to slough
And gloom, the name alone survives, Bob's Lane.

THE BRIDGE

I have come a long way to-day:
On a strange bridge alone,
Remembering friends, old friends,
I rest, without smile or moan,
As they remember me without smile or moan.

All are behind, the kind
And the unkind too, no more
To-night than a dream. The stream
Runs softly yet drowns the Past,
The dark-lit stream has drowned the Future and the Past.

No traveller has rest more blest
Than this moment brief between
Two lives, when the Night's first lights
And shades hide what has never been,
Things goodlier, lovelier, dearer, than will be or have been.

LIKE THE TOUCH OF RAIN

Like the touch of rain she was
On a man's flesh and hair and eyes
When the joy of walking thus
Has taken him by surprise:

With the love of the storm he burns,
He sings, he laughs, well I know how,
But forgets when he returns
As I shall not forget her " Go now".

Those two words shut a door
Between me and the blessed rain
That was never shut before
And will not open again.

TALL NETTLES

Tall nettles cover up, as they have done
These many springs, the rusty harrow, the plough
Long worn out, and the roller made of stone:
Only the elm butt tops the nettles now.

This corner of the farmyard I like most:
As well as any bloom upon a flower
I like the dust on the nettles, never lost
Except to prove the sweetness of a shower.

THESE THINGS THAT POETS SAID

These things that poets said
Of love seemed true to me
When I loved and I fed
On love and poetry equally.

But now I wish I knew
If theirs were love indeed,
Or if mine were the true
And theirs some other lovely weed:

For certainly not thus,
Then or thereafter, I
Loved ever. Between us
Decide, good Love, before I die.

Only, that once I loved
By this one argument
Is very plainly proved:
I, loving not, am different.

DRINKWATER

JOHN DRINKWATER (1882–1937) published poetry from 1903, and his considerable output shows on the whole the Georgian virtues and limitations, which he did not outgrow. His plays had the greater strength, notably *Abraham Lincoln* (1918), and he shared in the founding of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre. His literary studies include *Victorian Poetry* and *Patriotism in Literature*.

BIRTHRIGHT

Lord Rameses of Egypt sighed
  Because a summer evening passed;
And little Ariadne cried
  That summer fancy fell at last
To dust; and young Verona died
  When beauty's hour was overcast.

Theirs was the bitterness we know
  Because the clouds of hawthorn keep
So short a state, and kisses go
  To tombs unfathomably deep,
While Rameses and Romeo
  And little Ariadne sleep.

VERITY

Greatly to love, yet nothing to desire,
  Little to own, yet riches to enjoy,
Burning, to keep an unextinguished fire,
  All to command, yet sparely to employ—

Thus would I make my compact with my own,
  My frugal spirit, that I know my friend:
Yet knowledge leaves the talisman unknown,
  And I shall be a spendthrift to the end.

MOONLIT APPLES

At the top of the house the apples are laid in rows,
And the skylight lets the moonlight in, and those
Apples are deep-sea apples of green. There goes
A cloud on the moon in the autumn night.

A mouse in the wainscot scratches, and scratches, and then
There is no sound at the top of the house of men
Or mice; and the cloud is blown, and the moon again
Dapples the apples with deep-sea light.

They are lying in rows there, under the gloomy beams;
On the sagging floor; they gather the silver streams
Out of the moon, those moonlit apples of dreams,
And quiet is the steep stair under.

In the corridors under there is nothing but sleep.
And stiller than ever on orchard boughs they keep
Tryst with the moon, and deep is the silence, deep
On moon-washed apples of wonder.

FLECKER

JAMES ELROY FLECKER (1884–1915) served in the Middle East in the Consular Service, and died of tuberculosis. *His* play, *Hassan*, staged after his death, is rich in poetry and was magnificent as spectacle.

TO A POET A THOUSAND YEARS HENCE

I who am dead a thousand years,
  And wrote this sweet archaic song,
Send you my words for messengers
  The way I shall not pass along.

I care not if you bridge the seas,
  Or ride secure the cruel sky,
Or build consummate palaces
  Of metal or of masonry.

But have you wine and music still,
  And statues and a bright-eyed love,
And foolish thoughts of good and ill,
  And prayers to them who sit above?

How shall we conquer? Like a wind
  That falls at eve our fancies blow,
And old Mæonides the blind
  Said it three thousand years ago.

O friend unseen, unborn, unknown,
  Student of our sweet English tongue,
Read out my words at night, alone:
  I was a poet, I was young.

Since I can never see your face,
  And never shake you by the hand,
I send my soul through time and space
  To greet you. You will understa: '

THE GOLDEN JOURNEY TO SAMARKAND

Prologue

We who with songs beguile your pilgrimage
And swear that Beauty lives though lilies die,
We Poets of the proud old lineage
Who sing to find your hearts, we know not why,—

What shall we tell you? Tales, marvellous tales
Of ships and stars and isles where good men rest,
Where nevermore the rose of sunset pales,
And winds and shadows fall toward the West:

And there the world's first huge white-bearded kings
In dim glades sleeping, murmur in their sleep,
And closer round their breasts the ivy clings,
Cutting its pathway slow and red and deep.

II

And how beguile you? Death has no repose
Warmer and deeper than that Orient sand
Which hides the beauty and bright faith of those
Who made the Golden Journey to Samarkand.

And now they wait and whiten peaceably,
Those conquerors, those poets, those so fair:
They know time comes, not only you and I,
But the whole world shall whiten, here or there;

When those long caravans that cross the plain
With dauntless feet and sound of silver bells
Put forth no more for glory or for gain,
Take no more solace from the palm-girt wells.

When the great markets by the sea shut fast
All that calm Sunday that goes on and on:
When even lovers find their peace at last,
And Earth is but a star, that once had shone.

LAWRENCE

DAVID HERBERT LAWRENCE (1885-1930) was born in a Nottinghamshire mining village, his father a coal-miner. He soon gave up teaching to devote himself to writing, and after *Sons and Lovers* (1913) was one of the outstanding novelists of his day, seeking through his novels to wrestle with the life which frustrated him. His poems from *Love Poems and Others* (1913) onwards similarly echo the passionate struggle of his spirit, while his poetic genius is richly spent in his novels too.

FOR THE HEROES ARE DIPPED IN SCARLET

Before Plato told the great lie of ideals
men slimly went like fishes, and didn't care.
They had long hair, like Samson,
and clean as arrows they sped to the mark
when the bow-cord twanged.

They knew it was no use knowing
their own nothingness:
for they were not nothing.

So now they come back! Hark!
Hark! the low and shattering laughter of bearded men
with the slim waists of warriors, and the long feet
of moon-lit dancers.

Oh, and their faces scarlet, like the dolphin's blood!
Lo! the loveliest is red all over, rippling vermilion
as he ripples upwards!
laughing in his black beard!

They are dancing! they return, as they went, dancing!
For the thing that is done without the glowing as of god,
vermilion,
were best not done at all.
How glistening red they are!

SICILIAN CYCLAMENS

When he pushed his bush of black hair off his brow:
When she lifted her mop from her eyes, and screwed
    it in a knob behind
        —O act of fearful temerity!
When they felt their foreheads bare, naked to heaven,
    their eyes revealed:
When they felt the light of heaven brandished like a
    knife at their defenceless eyes,
And the sea like a blade at their face,
Mediterranean savages:
When they came out, face-revealed, under heaven,
    from the shaggy undergrowth of their own hair
For the first time,
They saw tiny rose cyclamens between their toes,
    growing
Where the slow toads sat brooding on the past.

Slow toads, and cyclamen leaves
Stickily glistening with eternal shadow
Keeping to earth.
Cyclamen leaves
Toad-filmy, earth-iridescent
Beautiful
Frost-filigreed
Spumed with mud
Snail-nacreous
Low down.

The shaking aspect of the sea
And man's defenceless bare face
And cyclamens putting their ears back.
Long, pensive, slim-muzzled greyhound buds
Dreamy, not yet present,
Drawn out of earth
At his toes.

Dawn-rose
Sub-delighted, stone-engendered
Cyclamens, young cyclamens
Arching
Waking, pricking their ears
Like delicate very-young greyhound bitches
Half-yawning at the open, inexperienced
Vista of day,
Folding back their soundless petalled ears.

Greyhound bitches
Bending their rosy muzzles pensive down,
And breathing soft, unwilling to wake to the new day
Yet sub-delighted.

Ah Mediterranean morning, when our world began!
Far-off Mediterranean mornings,
Pelasgic faces uncovered,
And unbudding cyclamens.

The hare suddenly goes uphill
Laying back her long ears with unwinking bliss.

And up the pallid, sea-blenched Mediterranean stone-
    slopes
Rose cyclamen, ecstatic fore-runner!
Cyclamens, ruddy-muzzled cyclamens
In little bunches like bunches of wild hares
Muzzles together, ears-aprick,
Whispering witchcraft.
Like women at a well, the dawn-fountain.

Greece, and the world's morning
Where all the Parthenon marbles still fostered the roots
of the cyclamen.
Violets
Pagan, rosy-muzzled violets
Autumnal
Dawn-pink,
Dawn-pale
Among squat toad-leaves sprinkling the unborn
Erechtheion marbles.

THE SEA, THE SEA—

The sea dissolves so much
and the moon makes away with so much more than
we know—

Once the moon comes down
and the sea gets hold of us
cities dissolve like rock-salt
and the sugar melts out of life
iron washes away like an old blood-stain
gold goes out into a green shadow
money makes even no sediment
and only the heart
glitters in salty triumph
over all it has known, that has gone now into salty
nothingness.

BEWARE THE UNHAPPY DEAD!

Beware the unhappy dead thrust out of life
unready, unprepared, unwilling, unable
to continue on the longest journey.
Oh, now as November draws near
the grey, grey reaches of earth's shadow,
the long mean marginal stretches of our existence
are crowded with lost souls, the uneasy dead
that cannot embark on the slinking sea beyond.

Oh, now they moan and throng in anger, and press back
through breaches in the walls of this our by-no-means
impregnable existence
seeking their old haunts with cold ghostly rage
old haunts, old habitats, old hearths,
old places of sweet life from which they are thrust out
and can but haunt in disembodied rage.

Oh, but beware, beware the angry dead.
Who knows, who knows how much our modern woe
is due to the angry unappeased dead
that were thrust out of life, and now come back at us
malignant, malignant, for we will not succour them.
Oh, on this day for the dead, now November is here
set a place for the dead, with a cushion and soft seat
and put a plate, and put a wine-glass out
and serve the best of food, the fondest wine
for your dead, your unseen dead, and with your hearts
speak with them and give them peace and do them honour.

Or else beware their angry presence, now
within your walls, within your very heart.
Oh, they can lay you waste, the angry dead.
Perhaps even now you are suffering from the havoc
they make
unknown within your breast and your deadened loins.

WOLFE

HUMBERT WOLFE (1885–1940), born in Italy, was educated at Bradford Grammar School and Oxford. His career lay in the Civil Service. *Requiem* (1927) and *The Uncelestial City* (1930), a satire, are among his best known volumes.

THE NUN

There is a pool in the convent garden. Still is
the amber basin, where no fishes leap,
but slowly cruise between the water-lilies
in sleepy gold, as those in silver sleep—
sleep on and on,
their sleep itself a quiet breathing orison.

In spring, like four tall monks, the cypresses
fold their dark green about their cloistral boughs,
while the young birches, those most human trees,
so sheltered, take their first and silver vows,
and flowers swing
their coloured censers in fragrance softly opening.

There is small noise of wind behind these walls,
nor any human echo save bells sobbing,
whose normal cadence actually falls
upon the pool, and sets the water throbbing
with the far sense
of some angelic trouble, some healing difference.

Pool of my heart! Not always was thy cup
guarded from the wind as now, as now unstirred,
nor did the water-flowers drifting up
spread their green plumage like a floating bird,
nor aught disturb
with any flash of fin the lilies' trailing herb.

But passion deeply moving, loss and terror,
anger and sorrow, turpitude and blame,
changed all, and what was made to be a mirror
for unassuming loveliness became
of shapes, that pass
in dark, a broken and tumultuous looking-glass.

Thus tarnishing with rust the silent mere
beyond the world, whose *stainless waters draw*
from the small pools the saints establish here
in passionless obedience to the law,
that says " Refuse !
What we denied remains, but what we had we lose."

(Dear Saint Teresa ! who laid the world aside
before the world had spoken, will you bless
after such pain this all-but-virgin bride
of Christ, who will not be His lover less
because she shared
the enchanting agony of love, that you were spared ?

Will you not take her softly by the hand,
nor tell her that she sacrificed in vain
for music, that she did not understand,
the lovely human counterpoint of pain,
whose echoes faint
are grace-notes in the full acceptance of the saint ?)

It is very quiet in the garden. Slowly
the oleanders let their roses fold.
The shadows reach my feet, and all the holy
precincts of evening are suddenly cold.
Sweet Christ ! a nun
lies down to sleep, and for the last time rejects the sun

H. D.

HILDA DOOLITTLE (*b.* 1886), born at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, settled in England in 1911. Her first volume of poems, *Sea Garden*, was published in this country in 1916. She married Richard Aldington, the English novelist, who had been one of the Imagist poets, among whom, with the encouragement of Ezra Pound, H.D. (her pen name) first appeared in 1913. Among her latest work is *The Walls Do Not Fall* (1944).

AN INCIDENT HERE AND THERE

An incident here and there,
and rails gone (for guns)
from your (and my) old town square:

mist and mist-grey, no colour,
still the Luxor bee, chick and hare
pursue unalterable purpose

in green, rose-red, lapis;
they continue to prophesy
from the stone papyrus:

there, as here, ruin opens
the tomb, the temple; enter,
there as here, there are no doors:

the shrine lies open to the sky,
the rain falls, here, there
sand drifts; eternity endures:

ruin everywhere, yet as the fallen roof
leaves the sealed room
open to the air,

so, through our desolation,
thoughts stir, inspiration stalks us
through gloom:

unaware, Spirit announces the Presence;
shivering overtakes us,
as of old, Samuel:

trembling at a known street-corner,
we know not nor are known;
the Pythian pronounces—we pass on

to another cellar, to another sliced wall
where poor utensils show
like rare objects in a museum;

Pompeii has nothing to teach us,
we know crack of volcanic fissure,
slow flow of terrible lava,

pressure on heart, lungs, the brain
about to burst its brittle case
(what the skull can endure!):

over us, Apocryphal fire,
under us, the earth sway, dip of a floor,
slope of a pavement

where men roll, drunk
with a new bewilderment,
sorcery, bedevilment:

the bone-frame was made for
no such shock knit within terror,
yet the skeleton stood up to it:

the flesh? it was melted away,
the heart burnt out, dead ember,
tendons, muscles shattered, outer husk dismembered,

yet the frame held:
we passed the flame: we wonder
what saved us? what for?

SASSOON

SIEGFRIED SASSOON (*b.* 1886) served in France in the 1914-1918 war, in which he won the M.C. He and Wilfred Owen were together in hospital, and Edmund Blunden remarks that the "impact of Sassoon's character, thought, and independent poetic method gave Owen a new purpose." *Poems Newly Selected* (1940) shows how his poetry grew and deepened beyond satire. His autobiographical books beginning with *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* (1928) are very notable.

ALL-SOULS' DAY

Close-wrapped in living thought I stand
Where death and daybreak divide the land,—
Death and daybreak on either hand
For exit and for entry;
While shapes like wind-blown shadows pass,
Lost and lamenting, "Alas, alas,
This body is only shrivelling grass,
And the soul a starlit sentry
Who guards, and as he comes and goes,
Points now to daybreak's burning rose,
And now toward worldhood's charnel close
Leans with regretless warning" . . .

I hear them thus—O thus I hear
My doomed companions crowding near,
Until my faith, absolved from fear,
Sings out into the morning,
And tells them how we travel far,
From life to life, from star to star;
Exult, unknowing what we are;
And quell the obscene derision
Of demon-haunters in our heart
Who work for worms and have no part
In Thee, O ultimate power, who art
Our victory and our vision.

THE DEATH-BED

He drowsed and was aware of silence heaped
Round him, unshaken as the steadfast walls;
Aqueous like floating rays of amber light,
Soaring and quivering in the wings of sleep,
Silence and safety; and his mortal shore
Lipped by the inward moonless waves of death.

Someone was holding water to his mouth.
He swallowed, unresisting; moaned and dropped
Through crimson gloom to darkness; and forgot
The opiate throb and ache that was his wound.
Water—calm, sliding green above the weir;
Water—a sky-lit alley for his boat,
Bird-voiced, and bordered with reflected flowers
And shaken hues of summer: drifting down,
He dipped contented oars, and sighed, and slept.

Night, with a gust of wind, was in the ward,
Blowing the curtain to a glimmering curve.
Night. He was blind; he could not see the stars
Glinting among the wraiths of wandering cloud;
Queer blots of colour, purple, scarlet, green,
Flickered and faded in his drowning eyes.

Rain; he could hear it rustling through the dark;
Fragrance and passionless music woven as one;
Warm rain on drooping roses; pattering showers
That soak the woods; not the harsh rain that sweeps
Behind the thunder, but a trickling peace
Gently and slowly washing life away.

* * * *

He stirred, shifting his body; then the pain
Leaped like a prowling beast, and gripped and tore
His groping dreams with grinding claws and fangs.
But someone was beside him; soon he lay
Shuddering because that evil thing had passed.
And Death, who'd stepped toward him, paused and
stared.

Light many lamps and gather round his bed.
Lend him your eyes, warm blood, and will to live.
Speak to him; rouse him; you may save him yet.
He's young; he hated war; how should he die
When cruel old campaigners win safe through?

But Death replied: "I choose him." So he went,
And there was silence in the summer night;
Silence and safety; and the veils of sleep.
Then, far away, the thudding of the guns.
1916.

A FLOWER HAS OPENED

A flower has opened in my heart . . .
What flower is this, what flower of spring,
What simple, secret thing?
It is the peace that shines apart,
The peace of daybreak skies that bring
Clear song and wild swift wing.

Heart's miracle of inward light,
What powers unknown have sown your seed
And your perfection freed? . . .
O flower within me wondrous white,
I know you only as my need
And my unsealèd sight.

BROOKE

RUPERT BROOKE (1887–1915), Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, after serving on the Antwerp expedition in 1914, died of fever at Scyros. His *Poems* appeared in 1911, *1914 and Other Poems* in 1915. The background of his sonnets of 1914 can be excellently seen in C. E. Montague's *Disenchantment*.

THE GREAT LOVER

I have been so great a lover: filled my days
So proudly with the splendour of Love's praise,
The pain, the calm, and the astonishment,
Desire illimitable, and still content,
And all dear names men use, to cheat despair,
For the perplexed and viewless streams that bear
Our hearts at random down the dark of life.
Now, ere the unthinking silence on that strife
Steals down, I would cheat drowsy Death so far,
My night shall be remembered for a star
That outshone all the suns of all men's days.
Shall I not crown them with immortal praise
Whom I have loved, who have given me, dared with me
High secrets, and in darkness knelt to see
The inenarrable godhead of delight?
Love is a flame:—we have beaconed the world's night.
A city:—and we have built it, these and I.
An emperor:—we have taught the world to die.
So, for their sakes I loved, ere I go hence,
And the high cause of Love's magnificence,
And to keep loyalties young, I'll write those names
Golden for ever, eagles, crying flames,
And set them as a banner, that men may know,
To dare the generations, burn, and blow
Out on the wind of Time, shining and streaming. . . .

These I have loved:
White plates and cups, clean-gleaming,
Ringed with blue lines; and feathery, faery dust;
Wet roofs, beneath the lamp-light; the strong crust
Of friendly bread; and many-tasting food;
Rainbows; and the blue bitter smoke of wood;
And radiant raindrops couching in cool flowers;
And flowers themselves, that sway through sunny hours,
Dreaming of moths that drink them under the moon;
Then, the cool kindliness of sheets, that soon
Smooth away trouble; and the rough male kiss
Of blankets; grainy wood; live hair that is
Shining and free; blue-massing clouds; the keen
Unpassioned beauty of a great machine;
The benison of hot water; furs to touch;
The good smell of old clothes; and other such—
The comfortable smell of friendly fingers,
Hair's fragrance, and the musty reek that lingers
About dead leaves and last year's ferns. . . .
Dear names,
And thousand other throng to me! Royal flames;
Sweet water's dimpling laugh from tap or spring;
Holes in the ground; and voices that do sing;
Voices in laughter, too; and body's pain,
Soon turned to peace; and the deep-panting train;
Firm sands; the little dulling edge of foam
That browns and dwindles as the wave goes home;
And washen stones, gay for an hour; the cold
Graveness of iron; moist black earthen mould;
Sleep; and high places; footprints in the dew;
And oaks; and brown horse-chestnuts, glossy-new;
And new-peeled sticks; and shining pools on grass;—
All these have been my loves. And these shall pass,
Whatever passes not, in the great hour,
Not all my passion, all my prayers, have power

To hold them with me through the gate of Death.
They'll play deserter, turn with the traitor breath,
Break the high bond we made, and sell Love's trust
And sacramented covenant to the dust.
—Oh, never a doubt but, somewhere, I shall wake,
And give what's left of love again, and make
New friends, now strangers. . . .
But the best I've known
Stays here, and changes, breaks, grows old, is blown
About the winds of the world, and fades from brains
Of living men, and dies.
Nothing remains.

O dear my loves, O faithless, once again
This one last gift I give: that after men
Shall know, and later lovers, far-removed,
Praise you, " All these were lovely "; say, " He loved ".

THE DEAD

Blow out, you bugles, over the rich Dead!
There's none of these so lonely and poor of old,
But, dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.
These laid the world away; poured out the red
Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be
Of work and joy, and that unhoped serene,
That men call age; and those who would have been,
Their sons, they gave, their immortality.

Blow, bugles, blow! They brought us, for our dearth,
Holiness, lacked so long, and Love, and Pain.
Honour was come back, as a king, to earth,
And paid his subjects with a royal wage;
And Nobleness walks in our ways again;
And we have come in to our heritage.

EDITH SITWELL

EDITH SITWELL (*b.* 1887), daughter of Sir George Sitwell, Bart., of Renishaw Park in Derbyshire, has lived above all for the art of poetry. Rich in the finer traditions of the past, her highly individualist spirit has fashioned its own vision of beauty and truth with an originality of technique which, in her earlier period, startled some critics. Her poetry began in 1915, and after a break about 1930 resumed some ten years later even richer and deeper than before. Her prose includes *Alexander Pope* (1930), *The English Eccentrics* (1933), and *Aspects of Modern Poetry*. The following poems all belong to 1940 and after.

STILL FALLS THE RAIN

(THE RAIDS, 1940. NIGHT AND DAWN)

Still falls the Rain—
Dark as the world of man, black as our loss—
Blind as the nineteen hundred and forty nails
Upon the Cross.

Still falls the Rain
With a sound like the pulse of the heart that is changed
 to the hammer-beat
In the Potter's Field, and the sound of the impious feet

On the Tomb:
 Still falls the Rain
In the Field of Blood where the small hopes breed and
 the human brain
Nurtures its greed, that worm with the brow of Cain.

ll falls the Rain
 the feet of the Starved Man hung upon the Cross.
hrist that each day, each night, nails there, have mercy
on us—
On Dives and on Lazarus:
Under the Rain the sore and the gold are as one.

Still falls the Rain—
Still falls the Blood from the Starved Man's wounded
Side:
He bears in his Heart all wounds,—those of the light
that died,
The last faint spark
In the self-murdered heart, the wounds of the sad
uncomprehending dark,
The wounds of the baited bear,—
The blind and weeping bear whom the keepers beat
On his helpless flesh . . . the tears of the hunted hare.

Still falls the Rain—
Then—O Ile leape up to my God: who pulles me
doune—
See, see where Christ's blood streames in the firmament
It flows from the Brow we nailed upon the tree
Deep to the dying, to the thirsting heart
That holds the fires of the world,—dark-smirched wi
pain
As Caesar's laurel crown.

Then sounds the voice of One who like the heart of
Was once a child who among beasts has lain—
" Still do I love, still shed my innocent light, my Bl
for thee ".

HOW MANY HEAVENS . . .

The emeralds are singing on the grasses
And in the trees the bells of the long cold are ringing,—
My blood seems changed to emeralds like the spears
Of grass beneath the earth piercing and singing.

The flame of the first blade
Is an angel piercing through the earth to sing
" God is everything !
The grass within the grass, the angel in the angel, flame
Within the flame, and He is the green shade that came
To be the heart of shade ".

The grey-beard angel of the stone,
Who has grown wise with age, cried, " Not alone
Am I within my silence,—God is the stone in the still
stone, the silence laid
In the heart of silence " . . . then, above the glade

The yellow straws of light
Whereof the sun has built his nest, cry " Bright
Is the world, the yellow straw
My brother,—God is the straw within the straw:—
All things are Light ".

He is the sea of ripeness and the sweet apple's emerald
lore.
So you, my flame of grass, my root of the world from
which all Spring shall grow,
O you, my hawthorn bough of the stars, now leaning low
Through the day, for your flowers to kiss my lips, shall
know
He is the core of the heart of love, and He, beyond
labouring seas, our ultimate shore.

THE YOUTH WITH THE RED-GOLD HAIR

The gold-armoured ghost from the Roman road
Sighed over the wheat
" Fear not the sound and the glamour
Of my gold armour—
(The sound of the wind and the wheat)
Fear not its clamour. . . .
Fear only the red-gold sun with the fleece of a fox
Who will steal the fluttering bird you hide in your
breast.
Fear only the red-gold rain
That will dim your brightness, O my tall tower of the
corn,
You,—my blonde girl. . . ."
But the wind sighed " Rest". . . .
The wind in his grey knight's armour
The wind in his grey night armour
Sighed over the fields of the wheat, " He is gone . . . .
Forlorn."

SONG

The Queen Bee sighed, " How heavy is my sweet gold,"
To the wind in the honey-hive.
And sighed the old King, " The weight of my crown is
cold—
And laden is life ! "
" How heavy," sighed the gold heart of the day, " is
the heat ! "
Ah, not so laden sweet
As my heart with its infinite gold and its weight of love.

ELIOT

THOMAS STEARNS ELIOT (*b.* 1888), born at St. Louis, ssouri, of a New England family, whose founder nigrated from East Coker in Somerset about 1670, udied at Harvard, the Sorbonne and Oxford. He ettled in England in 1914, and became naturalised in 927. In addition to *Collected Poems, 1909-1935,* is creative writing includes *Four Quartets* (1945), and the plays *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) and *Family Reunion.* As well as much influential criticism, he has written *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939).

PRELUDE

The winter evening settles down
With smell of steaks in passageways.
Six o'clock.
The burnt-out ends of smoky days.
And now a gusty shower wraps
The grimy scraps
Of withered leaves about your feet
And newspapers from vacant lots;
The showers beat
On broken blinds and chimney-pots,
And at the corner of the street
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.
And then the lighting of the lamps.

ANIMULA

" Issues from the hand of God, the simple soul "
To a flat world of changing lights and noise,
To light, dark, dry or damp, chilly or warm;
Moving between the legs of tables and of chairs,
Rising or falling, grasping at kisses and toys,
Advancing boldly, sudden to take alarm,
Retreating to the corner of arm and knee,
Eager to be reassured, taking pleasure
In the fragrant brilliance of the Christmas tree,
Pleasure in the wind, the sunlight and the sea;
Studies the sunlit pattern on the floor
And running stags around a silver tray;
Confounds the actual and the fanciful,
Content with playing-cards and kings and queens,
What the fairies do and what the servants say.
The heavy burden of the growing soul
Perplexes and offends more, day by day;
Week by week, offends and perplexes more
With the imperatives of " is and seems "
And may and may not, desire and control.
The pain of living and the drug of dreams
Curl up the small soul in the window seat
Behind the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.
Issues from the hand of time the simple soul
Irresolute and selfish, misshapen, lame,
Unable to fare forward or retreat,
Fearing the warm reality, the offered good,
Denying the importunity of the blood,
Shadow of its own shadows, spectre in its own gloom,
Leaving disordered papers in a dusty room;
Living first in the silence after the viaticum.

Pray for Guiterriez, avid of speed and power,
For Boudin, blown to pieces,
For this one that made a great fortune,
And that one who went his own way.
Pray for Floret, by the boarhound slain between the
    yew trees,
Pray for us now and at the hour of our birth.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Children's voices in the orchard
Between the blossom- and the fruit-time:
Golden head, crimson head,
Between the green tip and the root.
Black wing, brown wing, hover over;
Twenty years and the spring is over;
To-day grieves, to-morrow grieves,
Cover me over, light-in-leaves;
Golden head, black wing,
Cling, swing,
Spring, sing,
Swing up into the apple-tree.

DEATH BY WATER

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,
Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell
And the profit and loss.
                A current under sea
Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell
He passed the stages of his age and youth
Entering the whirlpool.
                Gentile or Jew
O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,
Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall
    as you.

BURNT NORTON (IV)

Time and the bell have buried the day,
The black cloud carries the sun away.
Will the sunflower turn to us, will the clematis
Stray down, bend to us; tendril and spray
Clutch and cling?
Chill
Fingers of yew be curled
Down on us? After the kingfisher's wing
Has answered light to light, and is silent, the light is
still
At the still point of the turning world.

GERONTION

Thou hast nor youth nor age
But as it were an after dinner sleep
Dreaming of both.

Here I am, an old man in a dry month,
Being read to by a boy, waiting for rain.
I was neither at the hot gates
Nor fought in the warm rain
Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,
Bitten by flies, fought.
My house is a decayed house,
And the jew squats on the window sill, the owner,
Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp,
Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in London.
The goat coughs at night in the field overhead;
Rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron, merds.
The woman keeps the kitchen, makes tea,
Sneezes at evening, poking the peevish gutter.
I an old man,
A dull head among windy spaces.

Signs are taken for wonders. "We would see a sign!"
The word within a word, unable to speak a word,
Swaddled with darkness. In the juvescence of the year
Came Christ the tiger

In depraved May, dogwood and chestnut, flowering judas,
To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk
Among whispers; by Mr. Silvero
With caressing hands, at Limoges
Who walked all night in the next room;
By Hakagawa, bowing among the Titians;
By Madame de Tornquist, in the dark room
Shifting the candles; Fraülein von Kulp
Who turned in the hall, one hand on the door. Vacant
    shuttles
Weave the wind. I have no ghosts,
An old man in a draughty house
Under a windy knob.

After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
Guides us by vanities. Think now
She gives when our attention is distracted
And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions
That the giving famishes the craving. Gives too late
What's not believed in, or if still believed,
In memory only, reconsidered passion. Gives too soon
Into weak hands, what's thought can be dispensed with
Till the refusal propagates a fear. Think
Neither fear nor courage saves us. Unnatural vices
Are fathered by our heroism. Virtues
Are forced upon us by our impudent crimes.
These tears are shaken from the wrath-bearing tree.

The tiger springs in the new year. Us he devours.
    Think at last
We have not reached conclusion, when I
Stiffen in a rented house. Think at last
I have not made this show purposelessly
And it is not by any concitation
Of the backward devils.
I would meet you upon this honestly.
I that was near your heart was removed therefrom
To lose beauty in terror, terror in inquisition.
I have lost my passion: why should I need to keep it
Since what is kept must be adulterated?
I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch:
How should I use them for your closer contact?

These with a thousand small deliberations
Protract the profit of their chilled delirium,
Excite the membrane, when the sense has cooled,
With pungent sauces, multiply variety
In a wilderness of mirrors. What will the spider do,
Suspend its operations, will the weevil
Delay? De Bailhache, Fresca, Mrs. Cammel, whirled
Beyond the circuit of the shuddering Bear
In fractured atoms. Gull against the wind, in the
    windy straits
Of Belle Isle, or running on the Horn,
White feathers in the snow, the Gulf claims,
And an old man driven by the Trades
To a sleepy corner.
                    Tenants of the house,
Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season.

From THE ROCK (X)

O Light Invisible, we praise Thee!
Too bright for mortal vision.
O Greater Light, we praise Thee for the less;
The eastern light our spires touch at morning,
The light that slants upon our western doors at evening,
The twilight over stagnant pools at batflight,
Moon light and star light, owl and moth light,
Glow-worm glowlight on a grassblade.
O Light Invisible, we worship Thee!

We thank Thee for the lights that we have kindled,
The light of altar and of sanctuary;
Small lights of those who meditate at midnight
And lights directed through the coloured panes of windows
And light reflected from the polished stone,
The gilded carven wood, the coloured fresco.
Our gaze is submarine, our eyes look upward
And see the light that fractures through unquiet water.
We see the light but see not whence it comes.
O Light Invisible, we glorify Thee!

EAST COKER (I)

In my beginning is my end. In succession
Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place
Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass.
Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,
Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth
Which is already flesh, fur and faeces,
Bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf.
Houses live and die: there is a time for building
And a time for living and for generation
And a time for the wind to break the loosened pane
And to shake the wainscot where the field-mouse trots
And to shake the tattered arras woven with a silent
motto.

In my beginning is my end. Now the light falls
Across the open field, leaving the deep lane
Shuttered with branches, dark in the afternoon,
Where you lean against a bank while a van passes,
And the deep lane insists on the direction
Into the village, in the electric heat
Hypnotised. In a warm haze the sultry light
Is absorbed, not refracted, by grey stone.
The dahlias sleep in the empty silence.
Wait for the early owl.

In that open field
If you do not come too close, if you do not come too
close,
On a summer midnight, you can hear the music
Of the weak pipe and the little drum
And see them dancing around the bonfire
The association of man and woman
In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie—

A dignified and commodious sacrament.
Two and two, necessarye coniunction,
Holding eche other by the hand or the arm
Whiche betokeneth concorde. Round and round the fire
Leaping through the flames, or joined in circles,
Rustically solemn or in rustic laughter
Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes
Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth
Mirth of those long since under earth
Nourishing the corn. Keeping time,
Keeping the rhythm in their dancing
As in their living in the living seasons
The time of the seasons and the constellations
The time of milking and the time of harvest
The time of the coupling of man and woman
And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling.
Eating and drinking. Dung and death.

Dawn points, and another day
Prepares for heat and silence. Out at sea the dawn wind
Wrinkles and slides. I am here
Or there, or elsewhere. In my beginning.

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MILLAY

Edna St. Vincent Millay (*b.* 1892) was born in Maine (U.S.A.) and went to Columbia University. She wrote her first notable poem *Renascence* in 1912. *Fatal Interview* (1931), a sonnet series, ranks high among her work, which also includes poetic dramas. *The Harp-Weaver* (1923) won her the Pulitzer Prize for poetry.

MY CANDLE

My candle burns at both ends;
  It will not last the night;
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends—
  It gives a lovely light!

GOD'S WORLD

O world, I cannot hold thee close enough!
    Thy winds, thy wide grey skies!
    Thy mists, that roll and rise!
Thy woods, this autumn day, that ache and sag
And all but cry with colour! That gaunt crag
To crush! To lift the lean of that black bluff!
World, World, I cannot get thee close enough!

Long have I known a glory in it all,
    But never knew I this;
    Here such a passion is
As stretcheth me apart,—Lord, I do fear
Thou'st made the world too beautiful this year,
My soul is all but out of me,—let fall
No burning leaf; prithee, let no bird call.

WRAITH

" Thin Rain, whom are you haunting,
  That you haunt my door ? "
—Surely it is not I she's wanting;
  Someone living here before—
" Nobody's in the house but me:
You may come in if you like and see."

Thin as thread, with exquisite fingers,—
  Have you seen her, any of you ?—
Grey shawl, and leaning on the wind,
  And the garden showing through ?

Glimmering eyes,—and silent, mostly,
  Sort of a whisper, sort of a purr,
Asking something, asking it over,
  If you get a sound from her.—

Ever see her, any of you ?—
  Strangest thing I've ever known,—
Every night since I moved in,
  And I came to be alone.

" Thin Rain, hush with your knocking !
  You may not come in !
This is I that you hear rocking;
  Nobody's with me, nor has been ! "

Curious, how she tried the window,—
  Odd, the way she tries the door,—
Wonder just what sort of people
  Could have had this house before . . .

SONNET

Time does not bring relief; you all have lied
Who told me time would ease me of my pain!
I miss him in the weeping of the rain;
I want him at the shrinking of the tide;
The old snows melt from every mountain-side,
And last year's leaves are smoke in every lane;
But last year's bitter loving must remain
Heaped on my heart, and my old thoughts abide!
There are a hundred places where I fear
To go,—so with his memory they brim!
And entering with relief some quiet place
Where never fell his foot or shone his face
I say, "There is no memory of him here!"
And so stand stricken, so remembering him.

EXILED

Searching my heart for its true sorrow,
  This is the thing I find to be:
That I am weary of words and people,
  Sick of the city, wanting the sea;

Wanting the sticky, salty sweetness
  Of the strong wind and shattered spray;
Wanting the loud sound and the soft sound
  Of the big surf that breaks all day.

Always before about my dooryard,
  Marking the reach of the winter sea,
Rooted in sand and dragging drift-wood,
  Straggled the purple wild sweet-pea;

Always I climbed the wave at morning,
Shook the sand from my shoes at night,
That now am caught beneath great buildings
Stricken with noise, confused with light.

If I could hear the green piles groaning
Under the windy wooden piers,
See once again the bobbing barrels,
And the black sticks that fence the weirs,

If I could see the weedy mussels
Crusting the wrecked and rotting hulls,
Hear once again the hungry crying
Overhead, of the wheeling gulls,

Feel once again the shanty straining
Under the turning of the tide,
Fear once again the rising freshet,
Dread the bell in the fog outside,—

I should be happy,—that was happy
All day long on the coast of Maine!
I have a need to hold and handle
Shells and anchors and ships again!

I should be happy, that am happy
Never at all since I came here.
I am too long away from water.
I have a need of water near.

OSBERT SITWELL

Sir Osbert Sitwell (*b.* 1892), brother of Edith Sitwell, served in the Grenadier Guards in France in the 1914-1918 war, and his early poetry had much satire of the war and post-war world. *England Reclaimed* (1927) showed both his satire and his appreciation of the world of his childhood. He has expressed himself most fully in prose, as in such short stories as *Triple Fugue* and the novel *Before the Bombardment* (1926). His latest writing is autobiographical as in *The Scarlet Tree* (1946).

FOOL'S SONG

Yesterday is my To-morrow !
Private joy and private sorrow
Fade out of sight;
(Light, light, more light !)

The grin of the skull
Is now void and null,
Leaving no laughter
To float after.

(Echo cries " ' skull' . . . ' dull, dull,'
Of fools is the world full,
Leaving hereafter
Matter for slaughter ! ")

Did you see—I saw—a tear
Falling, falling from King Lear,
No moisture giving,
Dry and perfect pearl of steel ?

It fell, I tell you, to assuage
The nations that rage,
Mad as he, in wracking fear.
Do *you* think him mad, old Lear,

Because his eyes should thus sweat steel,
Icy, hard and without feel,
That, falling, whirring, polished round
Can dig his own deep grave in ground?

. . . . .

Hollow, my love, hollow your eye
And fie for your bony thigh, fie!
Let me count yours—I'm alive!—
Fingers, one, two, three, four, five!

Let me thank you, as I trace
All your elegance and grace,
Let me thank you for your smile
That will last so long a while.

1941.

PERSONAL PREJUDICES

Before the last few individuals
Are staked upon the ant-heaps
For the dear little creatures to devour,
Let me recapitulate;

I hate high deeds
Mid high, aspiring words,
The bellow of old, blowsy buffaloes.
I love the beauty of the flowering meads
And sun-baked shepherds piping to their herds,
And waters lapping old walls, gold and rose.

I hate the clamorous voices of the crowd,
Its call for all to sacrifice for ever,
Abhor the dronings of its limpet leaders.
I love the quiet talk of those endowed
With reason—call it treason—; the endeavour
To live and love. I hate the million readers

(I love their money, but shall see it never).
I love the panther on its stealthy paws
Leaping from past to future in streaked flash.
I love to prick the bubbles, and to sever
The laws that clutter up effect with cause,
To trip the clown and then to see him crash.

I love the peasant's earth-old cunning,
The look of all things bred from a long line,
And talk up in the air, upon the ladders.
I hate the boasting first, and then the running,
The blatant brag and then regretful whine,
The bloated money-bags that burst like bladders.

I hate war's busy beetles all arrayed
In dung-bright armour of old truth outworn.
I hate the clicking tongues within accustomed grooves,
I love speech to be bitter as a blade,
The unicorn with his rare ivory horn
And centaurs charging crowds with thundering hooves.

THE VISION

I saw a cloud upon a hill
  Anchor its shadow on a grave;
I saw a Vulture, oh ! how still,
  Upon a broken architrave.

I saw a hill within a cloud,
  I saw a grave within its shade;
I saw a Phoenix from its shroud
  Soar upward to a fiery glade.

I saw a man with broken heart
  And angels drooping broken wings;
I heard the rumble of a cart
  Piled up with bodies of dead kings.

And then I saw a cloud ope wide
  And out of it a white dove come,
Alighting in sweet, cooing pride
  Upon the branch that rocked its home.

And then I heard its gentle moan
  Caged in the splendour of the tree,
A sail, a floating cloud held down
  By bird and butterfly and bee.

And then I heard a human voice,
  Far off, in laughter, loud and free;
The Phoenix cried " Rejoice! Rejoice!"
  And all my soul burned inwardly.

For as she cried, the West Wind blew
  With force gigantic that space gives,
And deep within my heart I knew
  That tyrants die, but freedom lives.

. . . . . .

I saw the cloud lift, drift along
  To shelter all the sweltering plains
Whence rose the loud triumphant song
Of broken hearts that break their chains.

I saw the Vulture's scaly face,
  I saw it quit the architrave;
I saw the Phoenix give it chase
  And blossoms burst forth from the grave.

March, 1939.

OWEN

WILFRED OWEN (1893–1918) was killed in France shortly before the Armistice, and his war poems were first published in 1920, with an Introduction by Siegfried Sassoon. His earlier verse was experimental, and his first master was Keats. Of his war poems he wrote: "above all I am not concerned with Poetry. My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity."

FUTILITY

Move him into the sun—
Gently its touch awoke him once,
At home, whispering of fields unsown.
Always it woke him, even in France,
Until this morning and this snow.
If anything might rouse him now
The kind old sun will know.

Think how it wakes the seeds,—
Woke, once, the clays of a cold star.
Are limbs, so dear-achieved, are sides,
Full-nerved—still warm—too hard to stir?
Was it for this the clay grew tall?
—O what made fatuous sunbeams toil
To break earth's sleep at all?

GREATER LOVE

Red lips are not so red
  As the stained stones kissed by the English dead.
Kindness of wooed and wooer
Seems shame to their love pure.
O Love, your eyes lose lure
  When I behold eyes blinded in my stead!

Your slender attitude
  Trembles not exquisite like limbs knife-skewed,
Rolling and rolling there
Where God seems not to care;
Till the fierce Love they bear
  Cramps them in death's extreme decrepitude.

Your voice sings not so soft,—
  Though even as wind murmuring through raftered
      loft,—
Your dear voice is not dear,
Gentle, and evening clear,
As theirs whom none now hear,
  Now earth has stopped their piteous mouths that
      coughed.

Heart, you were never hot,
  Nor large, nor full like hearts made great with shot;
And though your hand be pale,
Paler are all which trail
Your cross through flame and hail:
  Weep, you may weep, for you may touch them not.

STRANGE MEETING

It seemed that out of battle I escaped
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
Through granites which titanic wars had groined.
Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned,
Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.
Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and stared
With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,
Lifting distressful hands as if to bless.
And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall,
By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell.
With a thousand pains that vision's face was grained;
Yet no blood reached there from the upper ground,
And no guns thumped, or down the flues made moan.
" Strange friend," I said, " here is no cause to mourn."
" None," said the other, " save the undone years,
The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours,
Was my life also; I went hunting wild
After the wildest beauty in the world,
Which lies not calm in eyes, or braided hair,
But mocks the steady running of the hour,
And if it grieves, grieves richlier than here.
For by my glee might many men have laughed,
And of my weeping something had been left,
Which must die now. I mean the truth untold,
The pity of war, the pity war distilled.
Now men will go content with what we spoiled.
Or, discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled.
They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress,
None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress
Courage was mine, and I had mystery,
Wisdom was mine, and I had mastery;
To miss the march of this retreating world
Into vain citadels that are not walled.
Then, when much blood had clogged their chariot-whe

I would go up and wash them from sweet wells,
Even with truths that lie too deep for taint.
I would have poured my spirit without stint
But not through wounds; not on the cess of war.
Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were.
I am the enemy you killed, my friend.
I knew you in this dark; for so you frowned
Yesterday, through me as you jabbed and killed.
I parried; but my hands were loath and cold.
Let us sleep now. . . ."

ANTHEM FOR DOOMED YOUTH

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries for them from prayers or bells,
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of silent minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

READ

HERBERT READ (*b.* 1893) was born in Yorkshire and ʼent to Leeds University. He won the D.S.O. and ɅI.C. in the 1914-18 war. Director of a publishing irm, he has also been Professor of Fine Art at Edinburgh, 1931-33. A distinguished critic, his studies of Wordsworth and Shelley, his book on *English Prose Style*, and his *Collected Essays* (1938) are notable.

TO A CONSCRIPT OF 1940

Qui n'a pas une fois désespéré de l'honneur, ne sera jamais un héros.—GEORGES BERNANOS.

ʌ soldier passed me in the freshly-fallen snow,
His footsteps muffled, his face unearthly grey;
ʌnd my heart gave a sudden leap
As I gazed on a ghost of five-and-twenty years ago.

I shouted Halt! and my voice had the old accustomed ring
And he obeyed it as it was obeyed
In the shrouded days when I too was one
Of an army of young men marching

Into the unknown. He turned towards me and I said:
" I am one of those who went before you
Five-and-twenty years ago: one of the many who never returned,
Of the many who returned and yet were dead.

We went where you are going, into the rain and the mud;
We fought as you will fight
With death and darkness and despair;
We gave what you will give—our brains and our blood.

We think we gave in vain. The world was not renewed.
There was hope in the homestead and anger in the streets
But the old world was restored and we returned
To the dreary field and workshop, and the immemorial feud

Of rich and poor. Our victory was our defeat.
Power was retained where power had been misused
And youth was left to sweep away
The ashes that the fires had strewn beneath our feet.

But one thing we learned: there is no glory in the deed
Until the soldier wears a badge of tarnished braid;
There are heroes who have heard the rally and have seen
The glitter of a garland round their head.

Theirs is the hollow victory. They are deceived.
But you, my brother and my ghost, if you can go
Knowing that there is no reward, no certain use
In all your sacrifice, then honour is reprieved.

To fight without hope is to fight with grace,
The self reconstructed, the false heart repaired."
Then I turned with a smile, and he answered my salute
As he stood against the fretted hedge, which was l
white lace.

GRAVES

ROBERT GRAVES (*b.* 1895) is probably most widely known by his prose, such as the novel *I, Claudius*, but he has regarded his poetry as his true work. He made three collections of his published verse, 1914–26, 1926–30, 1930–33, but in 1938 published *Collected Poems*, which made a very severe selection from his previous work. His father was A. P. Graves, the Irish poet and song writer. Robert Graves served in France in the 1914–18 war. In 1926 he was for a year Professor of English Literature at Cairo University.

LOVE IN BARRENNESS

Below the ridge a raven flew
And we heard the lost curlew
Mourning out of sight below;
Mountain tops were touched with snow;
Even the long dividing plain
Showed no wealth of sheep or grain,
But fields of boulders lay like corn
And raven's croak was shepherd's horn
Where slow cloud-shadow strayed across
A pasture of thin heath and moss.

The North Wind rose: I saw him press
With lusty force against your dress,
Moulding your body's inward grace
And streaming off from your set face;
So now no longer flesh and blood
But poised in marble flight you stood.
O wingless Victory, loved of men,
Who could withstand your beauty then?

AN ENGLISH WOOD

This valley wood is pledged
To the set shape of things,
And reasonably hedged:
Here are no harpies fledged,
No rocs may clap their wings,
Nor gryphons wave their stings.
Here, poised in quietude,
Calm elementals brood
On the set shape of things:
They fend away alarms
From this green wood.
Here nothing is that harms—
No bulls with lungs of brass,
No toothed or spiny grass,
No tree whose clutching arms
Drink blood when travellers pass,
No mount of glass;
No bardic tongues unfold
Satires or charms.
Only, the lawns are soft,
The tree-stems, grave and old;
Slow branches sway aloft,
The evening air comes cold,
The sunset scatters gold.
Small grasses toss and bend,
Small pathways idly tend
Towards no fearful end.

A FROSTY NIGHT

" Alice, dear, what ails you,
Dazed and lost and shaken ?
Has the chill night numbed you ?
Is it fright you have taken ? "

" Mother, I am very well,
I was never better.
Mother, do not hold me so,
Let me write my letter."

" Sweet, my dear, what ails you ? "
" No, but I am well.
The night was cold and frosty—
There's no more to tell."

" Ay, the night was frosty,
Coldly gaped the moon,
Yet the birds seemed twittering
Through green boughs of June.

" Soft and thick the snow lay,
Stars danced in the sky—
Not all the lambs of May-day
Skip so bold and high.

" Your feet were dancing, Alice,
Seemed to dance on air,
You looked a ghost or angel
In the star-light there.

" Your eyes were frosted star-light;
Your heart, fire and snow.
Who was it said, ' I love you ' ? "
" Mother, let me go ! "

THE COOL WEB

Children are dumb to say how hot the day is,
How hot the scent is of the summer rose,
How dreadful the black wastes of evening sky,
How dreadful the tall soldiers drumming by.

But we have speech, that blunts the angry heat,
And speech, that dulls the rose's cruel scent.
We spell away the overhanging night,
We spell away the soldiers and the fright.

There's a cool web of language winds us in,
Retreat from too much gladness, too much fear:
We grow sea-green at last and coldly die
In brininess and volubility.

But if we let our tongues lose self-possession,
Throwing off language and its watery clasp
Before our death, instead of when death comes,
Facing the wide glare of the children's day,
Facing the rose, the dark sky and the drums,
We shall go mad no doubt and die that way.

FLYING CROOKED

The butterfly, a cabbage-white,
(His honest idiocy of flight)
Will never now, it is too late,
Master the art of flying straight,
Yet has—who knows so well as I?—
A just sense of how not to fly:
He lurches here and here by guess
And God and hope and hopelessness.
Even the aerobatic swift
Has not his flying-crooked gift.

NOBODY

Nobody, ancient mischief, nobody,
Harasses always with an absent body.

Nobody coming up the road, nobody,
Like a tall man in a dark cloak, nobody.

Nobody about the house, nobody,
Like children creeping up the stairs, nobody.

Nobody anywhere in the garden, nobody,
Like a young girl quiet with needlework, nobody.

Nobody coming, nobody, not yet here,
Incessantly welcomed by the wakeful ear.

Until this nobody shall consent to die
Under his curse must every man lie—

The curse of his jealousy, of his grief and fright,
Of sudden rape and murder screamed in the night.

BLUNDEN

EDMUND BLUNDEN (*b.* 1896) was born in Kent, served in France, and has been a University teacher at Tokio and Oxford. He has twice collected his published verse in *Poems, 1914-1930* and *Poems, 1930-1940*. *Undertones of War* (1928) contains both prose and poetry. His critical and biographical writings cover a wide field, and include *Thomas Hardy*, and *Shelley* (1946).

THE WAGGONER

The old waggon drudges through the miry lane,
  By the skulking pond where the pollards frown,
Notched dumb surly images of pain;
  On a dulled earth the night droops down.

Wincing to slow and wistful airs
  The leaves on the shrubbed oaks know their hour,
And the unknown wandering spoiler bares
  The thorned black hedge of a mournful shower.

Small bodies fluster in the dead brown wrack
  As the stumbling shaft-horse jingles past
And the waggoner flicks his whip a crack;
  The odd light flares on shadows vast

Over the lodges and oasts and byres
  Of the darkened farm; the moment hangs wan
As though nature flagged and all desires.
  But in the dim court the ghost is gone

From the hug-secret yew to the penthouse wall
  And stooping there seems to listen to
The waggoner leading the gray to stall,
  As centuries past itself would do.

FOREFATHERS

Here they went with smock and crook,
  Toiled in the sun, lolled in the shade,
Here they mudded out the brook
  And here their hatchet cleared the glade:
Harvest-supper woke their wit,
Huntsman's moon their wooings lit.

From this church they led their brides,
  From this church themselves were led
Shoulder-high; on these waysides
  Sat to take their beer and bread.
Names are gone—what men they were
These their cottages declare.

Names are vanished, save the few
  In the old brown Bible scrawled;
These were men of pith and thew,
  Whom the city never called;
Scarce could read or hold a quill,
Built the barn, the forge, the mill.

On the green they watched their sons
  Playing till too dark to see,
As their fathers watched them once,
  As my father once watched me;
While the bat and beetle flew
On the warm air webbed with dew.

Unrecorded, unrenowned,
  Men from whom my ways begin,
Here I know you by your ground
  But I know you not within—
There is silence, there survives
Not a moment of your lives.

Like the bee that now is blown
  Honey-heavy on my hand,
From his toppling tansy-throne
  In the green tempestuous land—
I'm in clover now, nor know
Who made honey long ago.

THE SUNKEN LANE

Behind the meadow where the windmill stood
There lies a swampy, unfrequented lane.
There lodges all the high ground's winter rain,
And stores sharp scent of sodden underwood.
Tussocks and plantains coarse and celandines
Trammel the creeping water, till at foot
It rills out where the spiky horsetails shoot
In tiny vision of primeval scenes.

So in this lane to-day my half-shut eyes
Saw monstrous waterwoods and weeds coiled high,
Whose heavy heat and shadow seemed to stun,
And saurians horrible of form and size.

Softly the twinkling water travelled by,
The jutting stones stood whitened with the sun.

RURAL ECONOMY (1917)

There was winter in those woods,
  And still it was July:
There were Thule solitudes
  With thousands huddling nigh;
There the fox had left his den,
The scraped holes hid not stoats but men.

To these woods the rumour teemed
  Of peace five miles away;
In sight, hills hovered, houses gleamed
  Where last perhaps we lay
Till the cockerels bawled bright morning and
The hours of life slipped the slack hand.

In sight, life's farms sent forth their gear;
  Here rakes and ploughs lay still;
Yet, save some curious clods, all here
  Was raked and ploughed with a will.
The sower was the ploughman too,
And iron seeds broadcast he threw.

What husbandry could outdo this ?
  With flesh and blood he fed
The planted iron that nought amiss
  Grew thick and swift and red,
And in a night though ne'er so cold
Those acres bristled a hundredfold.

Why, even the wood as well as field
  This ruseful farmer knew
Could be reduced to plough and tilled,
  And if he planned, he'd do;
The field and wood, all bone-fed loam,
Shot up a roaring harvest-home.

THE RECOVERY

From the dark mood's control
  I free this man; there's *light still in the West.*
The most virtuous, chaste, melodious soul
  Never was better blest.

Here medicine for the mind
  Lies in a gilded shade; this feather stirs
And my faith lives; the touch of this tree's rind,—
  And temperate sense recurs.

No longer the loud pursuit
  Of self-made clamours dulls the ear; here dwell
Twilight societies, twig, fungus, root,
  Soundless, and speaking well.

Beneath the accustomed dome
  Of this chance-planted, many-centuried tree
The snake-marked earthy multitudes are come
  To breathe their hour like me.

The leaf comes curling down,
  Another and another, gleam on gleam;
Above, celestial leafage glistens on,
  Borne by time's blue stream.

The meadow-stream will serve
  For my refreshment; that high glory yields
Imaginings that slay; the safe paths curve
  Through unexalted fields

Like these, where now no more
  My early angels walk and call and fly,
But the mouse stays his nibbling, to explore
  My eye with his bright eye.

ELEGY

On His Majesty King George V

To face the fortune of a scowling time,
  The omen and the rumour, we acclaimed
This quiet man proceeding in his prime;
  And his first triumph by foreboding maimed
Faded with little room for smile or sigh
When the world tempest plunged from that daemonic sky.

Recalling this, who does not picture still
  Silent battalions, those who first deployed
And met the lightning on the crest of the hill—
  Ironically went into the void?
Yet Irony, corporal of Valour, stood
Aside when two men's names arose, and called them good:

Kitchener dies not, his command endures;
  The King who heartened even that mighty heart
Stands with his marshal, and his gaze secures
  The dead battalions. These no more shall part.
With men like those, the Leaders and the Led,
Who can descant of hate? Who call their influence dead?

And who may school a king? Might Machiavel
  Now from his table-book communicate
Precept or paradox that could do well
  In the nerve centres of a modern state?
Better the sailor's plainness; better still
The honest man's conviction, selflessness, good will.

An honest King's the noblest work of God—
  Now passes one whom all the world termed so.
Some terrified the highest with their nod,
  This Monarch held no subject high or low.
Whatever passion raged, it shall be known,
He but appeared or spoke: that storm was overblown.

Whatever Party claimed as right or wrong,
  That he was wise and kind offended none;
Therefore our love shall be his evensong;
  All dwellers in the dark and in the sun,
In the most populous, the most lonely places
Shall set a King among their old familiar faces.

TWO VOICES

"There's *something in the air*," he said
  In the large parlour cool and bare;
The plain words in his hearers bred
  A tumult, yet in silence there
All waited; wryly gay, he left the phrase,
Ordered the march and bade us go our ways.

"We're going South, man"; as he spoke
  The howitzer with huge ping-bang
Racked the light hut; as thus he broke
  The death-news, bright the skylarks sang;
He took his riding-crop and humming went
Among the apple-trees all bloom and scent.

Now far withdraws the roaring night
  Which wrecked our flower after the first
Of those two voices; misty light
  Shrouds Thiepval Wood and all its worst:
But still "There's *something in the air*" I hear,
And still "We're going South, man," deadly near.

YOU NEVER STAY

Stay, kingfisher, so fleet along
This wind-blown water; stay by me,
Choose this soft-tinted willow tree,
And think no wrong
Where no wrong is; but I confess
My shape and presence must distress
A spirit of the wilderness.
I vainly long
To show you that this giant race
Has not abandoned every grace,
But shares your world; and calls it yours.
Come, praise with me this startling sun,
This primrose paradise begun
When winter still should stalk the moors.
The gold-chained bee, more kind than you,
Just now about and about me flew,
And seemed inclined, though grumblesome,
To pass the time of day:
But you, however oft I come,
You never stay.

RIDING

Laura Riding (*b.* 1901) considerably influenced the later poetry of Robert Graves, who collaborated with her in writing and in the Seizin Press. Her *Collected Poems* (1938) draws on nine volumes. She writes of herself as "a poet who writes strictly for the reasons of poetry," and of a poem as "an uncovering of truth of so fundamental and general a kind that no other name besides poetry is adequate except truth." In this passionate search for truth and the strict discipline of her approach to it lies a powerful originality.

PRISMS

What is beheld through glass seems glass.

The quality of what I am
Encases what I am not,
Smoothes the strange world.
I perceive it slowly,
In my time,
In my material,
As my pride,
As my possession:
The vision is love.

When life crashes like a cracked pane,
Still shall I love
Even the strange dead as the living once.
Death also sees, though distantly,
And I must trust then as now
A prism—of another kind,
Through which one may not put one's hands to tou

SO SLIGHT

It was as near invisible
As night in early dusk.
So slight it was,
It was as unbelievable
As day in early dawn.

The summer impulse of a leaf
To flutter separately
Gets death and autumn.
Such faint rebellion
Was lately love in me.

So slight, it had no hope or sorrow,
It could but choose
A passing flurry for its nuptial,
Drift off and fall
Like thistledown without a bruise.

HOSPITALITY TO WORDS

The small the far away
The unmeant meanings
Of sincere conversation
Encourage the common brain of talkers
And steady the cup-handles on the table.
Over the rims the drinking eyes
Taste close congratulation
And are satisfied.

Happy room, meal of securities.
The fire distributes feelings,
The cross-beam showers down centuries.
How mad for friendliness
Creep words from where they shiver and starve,
Small and far away in thought,
Untalkative and outcast.

THE WIND SUFFERS

The wind suffers of blowing,
The sea suffers of water,
And fire suffers of burning,
And I of a living name.

As stone suffers of stoniness,
As light of its shiningness,
As birds of their wingedness,
So I of my whoness.

And what the cure of all this?
What the not and not suffering?
What the better and later of this?
What the more me of me?

How for the pain-world to be
More world and no pain?
How for the old rain to fall
More wet and more dry?

How for the wilful blood to run
More salt-red and sweet-white?
And how for me in my actualness
To more shriek and more smile?

By no other miracles,
By the same knowing poison,
By an improved anguish,
By my further dying.

CAMPBELL

Roy Campbell (*b.* 1902) is a South African, who has lived in Southern France, where he had a share in a fleet of fishing-boats, and in Spain, where he took part in bull-fighting. He once gave his recreations as "poetry, horses, cattle, drawing and the guitar." *The Flaming Terrapin* (1924) was hailed by a reviewer as "a southwester straight from the sea." *Adamastor* (1930) is perhaps his most notable volume to date.

HORSES ON THE CAMARGUE

In the grey wastes of dread,
The haunt of shattered gulls where nothing moves
But in a shroud of silence like the dead,
I heard a sudden harmony of hooves,
And, turning, saw afar
A hundred snowy horses unconfined,
The silver runaways of Neptune's car
Racing, spray-curled, like waves before the wind.
Sons of the Mistral, fleet
As him with whose strong gusts they love to flee,
Who shod the flying thunders on their feet
And plumed them with the snortings of the sea;
Theirs is no earthly breed
Who only haunt the verges of the earth
And only on the sea's salt herbage feed—
Surely the great white breakers gave them birth.
For when for years a slave,
A horse of the Camargue, in alien lands,
Should catch some far-off fragrance of the wave
Carried far inland from his native sands,
Many have told the tale
Of how in fury, foaming at the rein,
He hurls his rider; and with lifted tail,
With coal-red eyes and cataracting mane,
Heading his course for home,
Though sixty foreign leagues before him sweep,

ill never rest until he breathes the foam
nd hears the native thunder of the deep.
ut when the great gusts rise
nd lash their anger on these arid coasts,
When the scared gulls career with mournful cries
And whirl across the waste like driven ghosts:
When hail and fire converge,
The only souls to which they strike no pain
Are the white-crested fillies of the surge
And the white horses of the windy plain.
Then in their strength and pride
The stallions of the wilderness rejoice;
They feel their Master's trident in their side,
And high and shrill they answer to his voice.
With white tails smoking free,
Long streaming manes, and arching necks, they show
Their kinship to their sisters of the sea—
And forward hurl their thunderbolts of snow.
Still out of hardship bred,
Spirits of power and beauty and delight
Have ever on such frugal pastures fed
And loved to course with tempests through the night.

MASS AT DAWN

I dropped my sail and dried my dripping seines
Where the white quay is chequered by cool planes
In whose great branches, always out of sight,
The nightingales are singing day and night.
Though all was grey beneath the moon's grey beam
My boat in her new paint shone like a bride,
And silver in my baskets shone the bream:
My arms were tired and I was heavy-eyed,
But when with food and drink, at morning light,
The children met me at the water-side,
Never was wine so red or bread so white.

THE ZULU GIRL

When in the sun the hot red acres smoulder,
Down where the sweating gang its labour plies,
A girl flings down her hoe, and from her shoulder
Unslings her child tormented by the flies.

She takes him to a ring of shadow pooled
By thorn-trees: purpled with the blood of ticks,
While her sharp nails, in slow caresses ruled,
Prowl through his hair with sharp electric clicks,

His sleepy mouth, plugged by the heavy nipple,
Tugs like a puppy, grunting as he feeds:
Through his frail nerves her own deep languors ripple
Like a broad river sighing through its reeds.

Yet in that drowsy stream his flesh imbibes
An old unquenched unsmotherable heat—
The curbed ferocity of beaten tribes,
The sullen dignity of their defeat.

Her body looms above him like a hill
Within whose shade a village lies at rest,
Or the first cloud so terrible and still
That bears the coming harvest in its breast.

PLOMER

WILLIAM PLOMER (b. 1903) was born in Northern Transvaal. He first tried farming, and was a trader in Zululand. He has lived in Japan and Greece. *Selected Poems* (1940) draws from volumes back to 1932. *Double Lives* is an autobiography of his earlier life.

THE SCORPION

Limpopo and Tugela churned
In flood for brown and angry miles
Melons, maize, domestic thatch,
The trunks of trees and crocodiles;

The swollen estuaries were thick
With flotsam, in the sun one saw
The corpse of a young negress bruised
By rocks, and rolling on the shore,

Pushed by the waves of morning, rolled
Impersonally among shells,
With lolling breasts and bleeding eyes,
And round her neck were beads and bells.

That was the Africa we knew,
Where, wandering alone,
We saw, heraldic in the heat,
A scorpion on a stone.

ARCHAIC APOLLO

Dredged in a net the slender god
Lies on deck and dries in the sun,
His head set proudly on his neck
Like a runner's whose race is won.

On his breast the Aegean lay
While the whole of history was made;
That long caress could not warm th
Nor the antique smile abrade.

He is as he was, inert, alert,
The one hand open, the other lightly shut,
His nostrils clean as holes in a flute,
The nipples and navel delicately cut.

The formal eyes are calm and sly,
Of knowledge and joy a perfect token—
The world being caught in the net of the sky
No hush can drown a word once spoken.

SEPTEMBER EVENING, 1938

As the golden grass burns out
In a cooling ash of dew
The lovers disembrace
And face the evening view.

The long plain down
Shaped like a thigh
Slopes towards the sea,
And away up in the sky

Too small to be heard
A plane like a silver spark
Bright in the sun's last rays
Drifts eastward into the dark;

A single stack of hay
In the valley at their feet
Like a primitive small church
Looks simple, strong and neat;

Inside a wattled fold
A flock of sheep
Stand, stir, or lie
Fleece against fleece asleep;

Lights in the bungalow,
A constant hum of cars;
Mallow flowers in the grass;
One or two stars.

With the fading day
All has grown clear:
That everything is vital
And infinitely dear.

Looking round, the girl thinks
" How precious to me
My home and my work and each thing
I can touch and can see,

George's navy-blue suit,
And my white linen dress,
And the way that his eyebrows grow—
This is my happiness ! "

And he, clasping her hand,
More grave than before,
Says, " Yes, I will fight
(If there is to be a war)

For all that has gone to make
Us, and this day."
Then arm in arm along the path
Silent they saunter away.

DAY LEWIS

CECIL DAY LEWIS (*b.* 1904) was born in Queen's County, Ireland. After editing *Oxford Poetry* with Auden in 1927, his first considerable volume of poetry was *Collected Poems, 1929–1933*, followed by *A Time to Dance* (1935), *Overtures to Death* (1938), *Poems in Wartime* (1940), and *Word Over All* (1943). *A Hope for Poetry* (1934) stated the poetic position as the younger poets then saw it.

From FROM FEATHERS TO IRON

(6)

Now she is like the white tree-rose
That takes a blessing from the sun:
Summer has filled her veins with light,
And her warm heart is washed with noon.

Or as a poplar, ceaselessly
Gives a soft answer to the wind:
Cool on the light her leaves lie sleeping,
Folding a column of sweet sound.

Powder the stars. Forbid the night
To wear those brilliants for a brooch
So soon, dark death, you may close down
The mines that made this beauty rich.

Her thoughts are pleiads, stooping low
O'er glades where nightingale has flown:
And like the luminous night around her
She has at heart a certain dawn.

From TRANSITIONAL POEM

(17)

When nature plays hedge-schoolmaster,
Shakes out the gaudy map of summer
And shows me charabanc, rose, barley-ear
And every bright-winged hummer,

He only would require of me
To be the sponge of natural laws
And learn no more of that cosmography
Than passes through the pores.

Why must I then unleash my brain
To sweat after some revelation
Behind the rose, heedless if truth maintain
On the rose-bloom her station?

When bullying April bruised mine eyes
With sleet-bound appetites and crude
Experiments of green, I still was wise
And kissed the blossoming rod.

Now summer brings what April took,
Riding with fanfares from the south,
And I should be no Solomon to look
My Sheba in the mouth.

Charabancs shout along the lane
And summer gales bay in the wood
No less superbly because I can't explain
What I have understood.

Let logic analyse the hive,
Wisdom's content to have the honey:
So I'll go bite the crust of things and thrive
While hedgerows still are sunny.

THE CONFLICT

I sang as one
Who on a tilting deck sings
To keep their courage up, though the wave hangs
That shall cut off their sun.

As storm-cocks sing,
Flinging their natural answer in the wind's teeth,
And care not if it is waste of breath
Or birth-carol of spring.

As ocean-flyer clings
To height, to the last drop of spirit driving on
While yet ahead is land to be won
And work for wings.

Singing I was at peace,
Above the clouds, outside the ring:
For sorrow finds a swift release in song
And pride its poise.

Yet living here,
As one between two massing powers I live
Whom neutrality cannot save
Nor occupation cheer.

None such shall be left alive:
The innocent wing is soon shot down,
And private stars fade in the blood-red dawn
Where two worlds strive.

The red advance of life
Contracts pride, calls out the common blood,
Beats song into a single blade,
Makes a depth-charge of grief.

Move then with new desires,
For where we used to build and love
Is no man's land, and only ghosts can live
Between two fires.

THE ECSTATIC

Lark, skylark, spilling your rubbed and round
Pebbles of sound in air's still lake,
Whose widening circles fill the noon; yet none
Is known so small beside the sun:

Be strong your fervent soaring, your skyward air!
Tremble there, a nerve of song!
Float up there where voice and wing are one,
A singing star, a note of light!

Buoyed, embayed in heaven's noon-wide reaches—
For soon light's tide will turn—Oh stay!
Cease not till day streams to the west, then down
That estuary drop down to peace.

COME, LIVE WITH ME

Come, live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
Of peace and plenty, bed and board,
That chance employment may afford.

I'll handle dainties on the docks
And thou shalt read of summer frocks:
At evening by the sour canals
We'll hope to hear some madrigals.

Care on thy maiden brow shall put
A wreath of wrinkles, and thy foot
Be shod with pain: not silken dress
But toil shall tire thy loveliness.

Hunger shall make thy modest zone
And cheat fond death of all but bone—
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my love.

THE REBUKE

Down in the lost and April days
What lies we told, what lies we told!
Nakedness seemed the one disgrace,
And there'd be time enough to praise
The truth when we were old.

The irresponsible poets sung
What came into their head:
Time to pick and choose among
The bold profusions of our tongue
When we were dead, when we were dead.

Oh wild the words we uttered then
In woman's ear, in woman's ear,
Believing all we promised when
Each kiss created earth again
And every far was near.

Little we guessed, who spoke the word
Of hope and freedom high
Spontaneously as wind or bird
To crowds like cornfields still or stirred,
It was a lie, a heart-felt lie.

Now the years advance into
A calmer stream, a colder stream,
We doubt the flame that once we knew,
Heroic words sound all untrue
As love-lies in a dream.

Yet fools are the old who won't be taught
Modesty by their youth:
That pandemonium of the heart,
That sensual arrogance did impart
A kind of truth, a kindling truth.

Where are the sparks at random sown,
The spendthrift fire, the holy fire?
Who cares a damn for truth that's grown
Exhausted haggling for its own
And speaks without desire?

BEHOLD THE SWAN

Behold the swan
Riding at her image, anchored there
Complacent, a water-lily upon
The ornamental water:
Queen of the mute October air,
She broods in that unbroken
Reverie of reed and water.

Now from the stricken
Pool she hoists and flurries,
And passes overhead
In hoarse, expressive flight:
Her wings bear hard
On the vibrant air: unhurried
The threat and pulse of wings, the throat
Levelled towards the horizon, see—
They are prophecy.

ONE AND ONE

I remember, as if it were yesterday,
Watching that girl from the village lay
The fire in a room where sunlight poured,
And seeing, in the annexe beyond, M. play
A prelude of Bach on his harpsichord.

I can see his face now, heavy and numb
With resignation to the powers that come
At his touch meticulous, smooth as satin,
Firm as hammers: I can hear the air thrum
With notes like sun-motes in a twinkling pattern.

Her task there fetched from the girl the innate
Tingling response of glass to a note:
She fitted the moment, too, like a glove,
Who deft and submissive knelt by the grate
Bowed as if in the labour of love.

Their orbits touched not: but the pure submission
Of each gave value and definition
To a snapshot printed in that morning's sun.
From any odd corner we may start a vision
Proving that one and one make One.

AUDEN

WYSTAN HUGH AUDEN (*b.* 1907) was regarded as the leader of the young poets of the nineteen-thirties. *Poems* (1930) immediately gave him prominence, and his plays in collaboration with Christopher Isherwood, *The Dog Beneath the Skin* (1935) and *The Ascent of F6* (1936), gained him a wider audience. He was awarded the King's Medal for Poetry in 1937. In 1939 he went to America, where he wrote *New Year Letter* (1941) and *For the Time Being* (1945).

LOOK, STRANGER

Look, stranger, at this island now
The leaping light for your delight discovers,
Stand stable here
And silent be,
That through the channels of the ear
May wander like a river
The swaying sound of the sea.

Here at the small field's ending pause
Where the chalk wall falls to the foam, and its tall ledges
Oppose the pluck
And knock of the tide,
And the shingle scrambles after the suck-
ing surf, and the gull lodges
A moment on its sheer side.

Far off like floating seeds the ships
Diverge on urgent voluntary errands;
And the full view
Indeed may enter
And move in memory as now these clouds do,
That pass the harbour mirror
And all the summer through the water saunter.

SIR, NO MAN'S ENEMY

Sir, no man's enemy, forgiving all
But will his negative inversion, be prodigal:
Send to us power and light, a sovereign touch
Curing the intolerable neural itch,
The exhaustion of weaning, the liar's quinsy,
And the distortions of ingrown virginity.
Prohibit sharply the rehearsed response
And gradually correct the coward's stance;
Cover in time with beams those in retreat
That, spotted, they turn though the reverse were great;
Publish each healer that in city lives
Or country houses at the end of drives;
Harrow the house of the dead; look shining at
New styles of architecture, a change of heart.

SONG

Let the florid music praise,
  The flute and the trumpet,
Beauty's conquest of your face:
In that land of flesh and bone,
Where from citadels on high
Her imperial standards fly,
  Let the hot sun
  Shine on, shine on.

O but the unloved have had power,
  The weeping and striking,
Always; time will bring their hour:
Their secretive children walk
Through your vigilance of breath
To unpardonable death,
  And my vows break
  Before his look.

MAY WITH ITS LIGHT BEHAVING

May with its light behaving
Stirs vessel, eye, and limb;
The singular and sad
Are willing to recover,
And to the swan-delighting river
The careless picnics come,
The living white and red.

The dead remote and hooded
In their enclosures rest; but we
From the vague woods have broken,
Forests where children meet
And the white angel-vampires flit;
We stand with shaded eye,
The dangerous apple taken.

The real world lies before us;
Animal motions of the young,
The common wish for death,
The pleasured and the haunted;
The dying master sinks tormented
In the admirers' ring,
The unjust walk the earth.

And love that makes impatient
The tortoise and the roe, and lays
The blonde beside the dark,
Urges upon our blood,
Before the evil and the good
How insufficient is
The endearment and the look.

PROLOGUE

O love, the interest itself in thoughtless Heaven,
Make simpler daily the beating of man's heart; within,
There in the ring where name and image meet,

Inspire them with such a longing as will make his thought
Alive like patterns a murmuration of starlings
Rising in joy over wolds unwittingly weave;

Here too on our little reef display your power,
This fortress perched on the edge of the Atlantic scarp,
The mole between all Europe and the exile-crowded sea;

And make us as Newton was, who in his garden watching
The apple falling towards England, became aware
Between himself and her of an eternal tie.

For now that dream which so long has contented our will,
I mean, of uniting the dead into a splendid empire,
Under whose fertilising flood the Lancashire moss

Sprouted up chimneys, and Glamorgan hid a life
Grim as a tidal rock-pool's in its glove-shaped valleys,
Is already retreating into her maternal shadow;

Leaving the furnaces gasping in the impossible air,
The flotsam at which Dumbarton gapes and hungers;
While upon wind-loved Rowley no hammer shakes

The cluster of mounds like a midget golf course, graves
Of some who created these intelligible dangerous marvels;
Affectionate people, but crude their sense of glory.

Far-sighted as falcons, they looked down another future;
For the seed in their loins were hostile, though afraid of
their pride,
And, tall with a shadow now, inertly wait.

In bar, in netted chicken-farm, in lighthouse,
Standing on these impoverished constricting acres,
The ladies and gentlemen apart, too much alone,

Consider the years of the measured world begun,
The barren spiritual marriage of stone and water.
Yet, O, at this very moment of our hopeless sigh

When inland they are thinking their thoughts but are
watching these islands,
As children in Chester look to Moel Fammau to decide
On picnics by the clearness or withdrawal of her treeless
crown,

Some possible dream, long coiled in the ammonite's
slumber
Is uncurling, prepared to lay on our talk and kindness
Its military silence, its surgeon's idea of pain;

And out of the Future into actual History,
As when Merlin, tamer of horses, and his lords to whom
Stonehenge was still a thought, the Pillars passed

And into the undared ocean swung north their prow,
Drives through the night and star-concealing dawn
For the virgin roadsteads of our hearts an
keel.

FISH IN THE UNRUFFLED LAKES

Fish in the unruffled lakes
The swarming colours wear,
Swans in the winter air
A white perfection have,
And the great lion walks
Through his innocent grove;
Lion, fish, and swan
Act, and are gone
Upon Time's toppling wave.

We till shadowed days are done,
We must weep and sing
Duty's conscious wrong,
The Devil in the clock,
The Goodness carefully worn
For atonement or for luck;
We must lose our loves,
On each beast and bird that moves
Turn an envious look.

Sighs for folly said and done
Twist our narrow days;
But I must bless, I must praise
That you, my swan, who have
All gifts that to the swan
Impulsive Nature gave,
The majesty and pride,
Last night should add
Your voluntary love.

RIMBAUD

The nights, the railway-arches, the bad sky,
His horrible companions did not know it;
But in that child the rhetorician's lie
Burst like a pipe: the cold had made a poet.

Drinks bought him by his weak and lyric friend
His senses systematically deranged,
To all accustomed nonsense put an end;
Till he from lyre and weakness was estranged.

Verse was a special illness of the ear;
Integrity was not enough; that seemed
The hell of childhood: he must try again.

Now, galloping through Africa, he dreamed
Of a new self, the son, the engineer,
His truth acceptable to lying men.

THE CAPITAL

Quarter of pleasures where the rich are always waiting,
Waiting expensively for miracles to happen,
O little restaurant where the lovers eat each other,
Café where exiles have established a malicious village;

You with your charm and your apparatus have abolished
The strictness of winter and the spring's compulsion;
Far from your lights the outraged punitive father,
The dullness of mere obedience here is apparent.

Yet with orchestras and glances, O, you betray us
To belief in our infinite powers; and the innocent
Unobservant offender falls in a moment
Victim to the heart's invisible furies.

In unlighted streets you hide away the appalling;
Factories where lives are made for a temporary use
Like collars or chairs, rooms where the lonely are battered
Slowly like pebbles into fortuitous shapes.

But the sky you illumine, your glow is visible far
Into the dark countryside, the enormous, the frozen,
Where, hinting at the forbidden like a wicked uncle,
Night after night to the farmer's children you beckon.

From THE DOG BENEATH THE SKIN

Now through night's caressing grip
Earth and all her oceans slip,
Capes of China slide away
From her fingers into day
And the Americas incline
Coasts towards her shadow line.
Now the ragged vagrants creep
Into crooked holes to sleep:
Just and unjust, worst and best,
Change their places as they rest:
Awkward lovers lie in fields
Where disdainful beauty yields:
While the splendid and the proud
Naked stand before the crowd
And the losing gambler gains
And the beggar entertains:
May sleep's healing power extend
Through these hours to our friend.
Unpursued by hostile force,
Traction engine, bull or horse
Or revolting succubus;
Calmly till the morning break
Let him lie, then gently wake.

MACNEICE

LOUIS MACNEICE (*b.* 1907) was born in Northern Ireland, and educated at Marlborough and Oxford. He has been Lecturer in Greek at Bedford College, London, and a member of the staff of the B.B.C. *Autumn Journal* (1939) contains much autobiography. He has published several volumes of poems since *Poems* (1935), and his writing also includes *Letters from Iceland* (jointly with Auden), *Modern Poetry*, a study of *W. B. Yeats*, and a radio play, *Columbus*.

SPRING SUNSHINE

In a between world, a world of amber,
The old cat on the sand-warm window-sill
Sleeps on the verge of nullity.

Spring sunshine has a quality
Transcending rooks and the hammering
Of those who hang new pictures,
Asking if it is worth it,
To clamour and caw, to add stick to stick for ever.

If it is worth while really
To colonise any more the already populous
Tree of knowledge, to portion and reportion
Bits of broken knowledge brittle and dead,
Whether it would not be better
To hide one's head in the warm sand of sleep
And be embalmed without hustle or bother.

The rooks bicker heckle bargain always
And market carts lumber—
Let me in the calm of the all-humouring sun
Also indulge my humour
And bury myself beyond creaks and cawings
In a below world, a bottom world of amber.

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AUBADE

Having bitten on life like a sharp apple
Or, playing it like a fish, been happy,

Having felt with fingers that the sky is blue,
What have we after that to look forward to?

Not the twilight of the gods but a precise dawn
Of sallow and grey bricks, and newsboys crying war.

THE BRITISH MUSEUM READING ROOM

Under the hive-like dome the stooping haunted readers
Go up and down the alleys, tap the cells of knowledge—
  Honey and wax, the accumulation of years—
Some on commission, some for the love of learning,
Some because they have nothing better to do
Or because they hope these walls of books will deaden
  The drumming of the demon in their ears.

Cranks, hacks, poverty-stricken scholars,
In pince-nez, period hats or romantic beards
  And cherishing their hobby or their doom
Some are too much alive and some are asleep
Hanging like bats in a world of inverted values,
Folded up in themselves in a world which is safe and
    silent:
  This is the British Museum Reading Room.

Out on the steps in the sun the pigeons are courting,
Puffing their ruffs and sweeping their tails or taking
  A sun-bath at their ease
And under the totem poles—the ancient terror—
Between the enormous fluted Ionic columns
There seeps from heavily jowled or hawk-like foreign faces
  The guttural sorrow of the refugees.

MEETING POINT

Time was away and somewhere else,
There were two glasses and two chairs
And two people with the one pulse
(Somebody stopped the moving stairs):
Time was away and somewhere else.

And they were neither up nor down,
The stream's music did not stop
Flowing through heather, limpid brown,
Although they sat in a coffee shop
And they were neither up nor down.

The bell was silent in the air
Holding its inverted poise—
Between the clang and clang a flower,
A brazen calyx of no noise:
The bell was silent in the air.

The camels crossed the miles of sand
That stretched around the cups and plates;
The desert was their own, they planned
To portion out the stars and dates:
The camels crossed the miles of sand.

Time was away and somewhere else.
The waiter did not come, the clock
Forgot them and the radio waltz
Came out like water from a rock:
Time was away and somewhere else.

Her fingers flicked away the ash
That bloomed again in tropic trees:
Not caring if the markets crash
When they had forests such as these,
Her fingers flicked away the ash.

God or whatever means the Good
Be praised that time can stop like this,
That what the heart has understood
Can verify in the body's peace
God or whatever means the Good.

Time was away and she was here
And life no longer what it was,
The bell was silent in the air
And all the room a glow because
Time was away and she was here.

GALWAY

O the crossbones of Galway,
The hollow grey houses,
The rubbish and sewage,
The grass-grown pier,
And the dredger grumbling
All night in the harbour:
The war came down on us here.

Salmon in the Corrib
Gently swaying
And the water combed out
Over the weir
And a hundred swans
Dreaming on the harbour:
The war came down on us here.

The night was gay
With the moon's music
But Mars was angry
On the hills of Clare
And September dawned
Upon willows and ruins:
The war came down on us here.

STEPHEN SPENDER

STEPHEN SPENDER (*b.* 1909), after leaving Oxford, where he edited *Oxford Poetry* (1929) with Macneice, travelled in Germany, and took an active part in propaganda work in Spain on the Government side in the Civil War. Several volumes of poetry followed *Poems* (1933). He has translated Lorca and other Spanish poets. Among his critical writing is *The Destructive Element* (1935). He served in the N.F.S. in the war.

THE PYLONS

The secret of these hills was stone, and cottages
Of that stone made,
And crumbling roads
That turned on sudden hidden villages.

Now over these small hills they have built the concrete
That trails black wire:
Pylons, those pillars
Bare like nude, giant girls that have no secret.

The valley with its gilt and evening look
And the green chestnut
Of customary root
Are mocked dry like the parched bed of a brook.

But far above and far as sight endures
Like whips of anger
With lightning's danger
There runs the quick perspective of the future.

This dwarfs our emerald country by its trek
So tall with prophecy:
Dreaming of cities
Where often clouds shall lean their swan-like neck.

THE EXPRESS

After the first powerful plain manifesto
The black statement of pistons, without more fuss
But gliding like a queen, she leaves the station.
Without bowing and with restrained unconcern
She passes the houses which humbly crowd outside,
The gasworks and at last the heavy page
Of death, printed by gravestones in the cemetery.
Beyond the town there lies the open country
Where, gathering speed, she acquires mystery,
The luminous self-possession of ships on ocean.
It is now she begins to sing—at first quite low
Then loud, and at last with a jazzy madness—
The song of her whistle screaming at curves,
Of deafening tunnels, brakes, innumerable bolts.
And always light, aerial, underneath
Goes the elate metre of her wheels.
Steaming through metal landscape on her lines
She plunges new eras of wild happiness
Where speed throws up strange shapes, broad curves
And parallels clean like the steel of guns.
At last, further than Edinburgh or Rome,
Beyond the crest of the world, she reaches night
Where only a low streamline brightness
Of phosphorus on the tossing hills is white.
Ah, like a comet through flame she moves entranced
Wrapt in her music no bird song, no, nor bough
Breaking with honey buds, shall ever equal.

MY PARENTS KEPT ME

My parents kept me from children who were rough
And who threw words like stones and who wore torn clothes.
Their thighs showed through rags. They ran in the street
And climbed cliffs and stripped by the country streams.

I feared more than tigers their muscles like iron
And their jerking hands and their knees tight on my arms.
I feared the salt coarse pointing of those boys
Who copied my lisp behind me on the road.

They were lithe, they sprang out behind hedges
Like dogs to bark at our world. They threw mud
And I looked another way, pretending to smile.
I longed to forgive them, yet they never smiled.

AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASS ROOM IN A SLUM

Far far from gusty waves, these children's faces.
Like rootless weeds the torn hair round their paleness.
The tall girl with her weighed-down head. The paper-
seeming boy with rat's eyes. The stunted unlucky heir
Of twisted bones, reciting a father's gnarled disease,
His lesson from his desk. At back of the dim class,
One unnoted, sweet and young: his eyes live in a dream
Of squirrels' game, in tree room, other than this.

On sour cream walls, donations. Shakespeare's head
Cloudless at dawn, civilised dome riding all cities.
Belled, flowery, Tyrolese valley. Open-handed map
Awarding the world its world. And yet, for these
Children, these windows, not this world, are world,
Where all their future's painted with a fog,
A narrow street sealed in with a lead sky,
Far far from rivers, capes, and stars of words.

Surely Shakespeare is wicked, the map a bad example
With ships and sun and love tempting them to steal—
For lives that slyly turn in their cramped holes
From fog to endless night? On their slag heap, these
children
Wear skins peeped through by bones and spectacles of
steel
With mended glass, like bottle bits on stones.
All of their time and space are foggy slum
So blot their maps with slums as big as doom.

Unless, governor, teacher, inspector, visitor,
This map becomes their window and these windows
That open on their lives like crouching tombs
Break, O break open, till they break the town
And show the children to the fields and all their world
Azure on their sands, to let their tongues
Run naked into books, the white and green leaves open
The history theirs whose language is the sun.

TWO ARMIES

Deep in the winter plain, two armies
Dig their machinery, to destroy each other.
Men freeze and hunger. No one is given leave
On either side, except the dead, and wounded.
These have their leave; while new battalions wait
On time at last to bring them violent peace.

All have become so nervous and so cold
That each man hates the cause and distant words
Which brought him here, more terribly than bullets.
Once a boy hummed a popular marching song,
Once a novice hand flapped the salute;
The voice was choked, the lifted hand fell,
Shot through the wrist by those of his own side.

From their numb harvest all would flee, except
For discipline drilled once in an iron school
Which holds them at the point of a revolver.
Yet when they sleep, the images of home
Ride wishing horses of escape
Which herd the plain in a mass unspoken poem.

Finally, they cease to hate: for although hate
Bursts from the air and whips the earth like hail
Or pours it up in fountains to marvel at,
And although hundreds fall, who can connect
The inexhaustible anger of the guns
With the dumb patience of these tormented animals?

Clean silence drops at night when a little walk
Divides the sleeping armies, each
Huddled in linen woven by remote hands.
When the machines are stilled, a common suffering
Whitens the air with breath and makes both one
As though these enemies slept in each other's arms.

Only the lucid friend to aerial raiders,
The brilliant pilot moon, stares down
Upon the plain she makes a shining bone
Cut by the shadow of many thousand bones.
Where amber clouds scatter on no-man's-land
She regards death and time throw up
The furious words and minerals which kill life.

RIDLER

ANNE RIDLER (*b.* 1912) published her first volume, *Poems*, in 1939, and followed it with *The Nine Bright Shiners* in 1943. In her poetry we often see the woman in the poet. Ridler is her married name.

THE COLD HEART

Our Spring seems warm in his eyes and skin,
But his breath comes chilly—the heart must be of ice—
His blue runnels frigid and his crocus lazy.
And I have known anger at my heart like this,
When I did not desire it and I did not agree,
And the mind would have melted but the heart held hard.
But here on the hill, above noise and anger,
I am not in heaven, but have golden fields
Filmed into mauve where a cloud creeps over,
With a woof like tussore; the trees cough gently
Below by the yellow and magenta houses,
The black calf's visage is wreathed in smiles
As he humps to his feet, and high up the glider
Strays haphazard into shafts of light.
Sharp and green the paths downward leading,
Each the precipitation of the day's peace.

AT PARTING

Since we through war awhile must part
Sweetheart, and learn to lose
Daily use
Of all that satisfied our heart:
Lay up those secrets and those powers
Wherewith you pleased and cherished me these two year

Now we must draw, as plants would,
On tubers stored in a better season,
Our honey and heaven;
Only our love can store such food.
Is this to make a god of absence?
A new-born monster to steal our sustenance?

We cannot quite cast out lack and pain.
Let him remain—what he may devour
We can well spare:
He never can tap this, the true vein.
I have no words to tell you what you were,
But when you are sad, think, Heaven could give no more.

ZENNOR

Seen from these cliffs the sea circles slowly.
 Ponderous and blue to-day, with waves furled,
 Slowly it crosses the curved world.
We wind in its waters with the tide,
 But the pendent ships afar
 Where the lightest blue and low clouds are
We lose as they hover and over the horizon slide.

When it was a dark blue heaven with foam like stars
 We saw it lean above us from the shore,
 And over the rocks the waves rear
Immense, and coming in with crests on fire;
 We could not understand,
 Watching the sea descend upon the land,
What kept it from flooding the world, being so much
  higher.

To-day it lies in place, and the dun houses,
 The apple-green cloudy oats, the cows that seem
 Compact of the yellow crust of their cream,
Shrink on Amalveor's grey and tawny sides,
 Sucking the last shreds of sun.
 But all life here is carried on
Against the crash and cry of the moving tides.

IN REGENT'S PARK

These Sunday *mornings* Londoners delight—
with or without the trotting child—
their workday eyes grown mild
but with their panoply precise and spry,
the handsome pleasure-ways of parks to try.

Dahlias down the banks flow crisp and bright,
the grass is winter-short and pungent,
dipping oars are plangent,
and in the light mist, dripping grey like silk,
water and trees and air seem smoothed in milk.

So that the forbidden island in the stream,
the chimney that over Lords looms,
and those peculiar domes,
might be near or distant illimitable miles;
and as the still sky breaks into a thousand gulls,

might burst into some bright or strange kind,
or open into a different scale.
To change in this style
is the property, I find, of love, which brings
a new dimension to all physical things.

For if I see my park with Vivian's eye—
the formal eye of a painter's mind—
it is changed as under his hand,
and through the mists of his being are visible
hints of glory before unimaginable.

One does not learn to look with another's eye
for ever, but the rigid world
moves and is unfurled.
This is the effect and virtue of passion's part,
that trains the eye and exercises the heart.

BARKER

George Barker (*b.* 1913) early impressed critics like Yeats and Edwin Muir by the rich promise of his very original genius. His earlier work was obscure, but growing clarity matches the power in *Lament and Triumph* (1940) and *Eros in Dogma* (1944). He has visited Japan and America.

ALLEGORY OF THE ADOLESCENT AND THE ADULT

It was when weather was Arabian I went
Over the downs to Alton where winds were wounded
With flowers and swathed me with aroma, I walked
Like Saint Christopher Columbus through a sea's welter
Of gaudy ways looking for a wonder.

Who was I, who knows, no one when I started,
No more than the youth who takes longish strides,
Gay with a girl and obstreperous with strangers,
Fond of some songs, not unusually stupid,
I ascend hills anticipating the strange.

Looking for a wonder I went on a Monday,
Meandering over the Alton down and moor;
When was it I went, an hour a year or more,
That Monday back, I cannot remember.
I only remember I went in a gay mood.

Hollyhock here and rock and rose there were,
I wound among them knowing they were no wonder;
And the bird with a worm and the fox in a wood
Went flying and flurrying in front, but I was
Wanting a worse wonder, a rarer one.

So I went on expecting miraculous catastrophe.
What is it, I whispered, shall I capture a creature
A woman for a wife, or find myself a king,
Sleep and awake to find Sleep is my kingdom?
How shall I know my marvel when it comes?

Then after long striding and striving I was where
I had so longed to be, in the world's wind,
At the hill's top, with no more ground to wander
Excepting downward, and I had found no wonder.
Found only the sorrow that I had missed my marvel.

Then I remembered, was it the bird or worm,
The hollyhock, the flower or the strong rock,
Was it the mere dream of the man and woman
Made me a marvel? It was not. It was
When on the hilltop I stood in the world's wind.

The world is my wonder, where the wind
Wanders like wind, and where the rock is
Rock. And man and woman flesh on a dream.
I look from my hill with the woods behind,
And Time, a sea's chaos, below.

PACIFIC SONNET

Between the wall of China and my heart
O exile is. Remembering the tremendous
Autumnals of nations threatening to end us all,
I speak of the things nearest to my heart.
These space cannot alienate, or time part
From me: O is it really an end of them,
The flowering moments that a poem blends
To Babylonian wreaths around my heart?

The arguments under arches in the rain
With lightning in our fists, the summer drives
Through the Dorset hills, evenings at the baths
With echoes exploding like bubbles as we dive
Down to quiet worlds: these, if not again
To be our happy lives, shall be our happy death.

THE DEATH OF YEATS

That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented face
With the trumpets of *Andromeda* rose and spoke,
Blaring the pitiful blast and airing hope
So hope and pity flourished. Now the place
Cold is where he was, and the gold face
Shimmers only through the echoes of a poem.

The swan mourns on the long abandoned lake,
And on the verge gather the great Irish ghosts
Whom only he could from their myth awaken
And make a kingdom. The luckless and the lost
Got glory from the shake of his hand as he passed,
The lunar emperor whom Time could not break.

The boulder where he rested his shoulder is
Luckier than most, who know nothing of
The tremendous gentleness of the poet's kiss,
Thwarted by passion and impelled by love.
But the lost leaf lashed in a March above
Shares sense of action that is also his.

Saints on mountains or animals in the ground
Often found the feather of his wing on their lips
Proving and loving them; stars in their eclipse
Saw his face watching through intervening ground:
And the small fry like fish came up at the sound
Of his voice and listened to his whistling lips.

But now the cloud only shall hear: the ant,
The winter bulb under the ground, and the hidden
Stream he made dumb by his murmur in death,
Lying between the rock and the jealous plant.
No matter how close to the ground I bend, his breath
Is not for me, and all divisions widen.

Remember the lion's head and the blonde angel
Whispering in the chimney; remember the river
Singing sweeter and sweeter as it grows older and older;
Remember the moon sees things from a better angle.
O forget the echoes that go on for ever,
And remember that the great harp-breasted eagle
Is now a grave.

THE SEAL BOY

See he slips like insinuations
Into the waves and sidles
Across breakers, diving under
The greater tidals,

Plunging, a small plane
Down dark altitudes,
Trailing bubbles like aerial bombs
Or a balloon's broods.

O moving ecstatic boy
Sliding through the gloomy seas
Who bring me pearls to enjoy
Rarer than to be found in these seas—

Between the fixed bars of your lips
Darts the kiss like silver
Fish, and in my wild grip
You harbour, for ever.

DYLAN THOMAS

DYLAN THOMAS (*b.* 1914) was born in Swansea. His poetic output, so far more notable for its quality than quantity, began with *Eighteen Poems* (1934). He also writes short stories as in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* and *The Map of Love.*

THIS BREAD I BREAK

This bread I break was once the oat,
This wine upon a foreign tree
Plunged in its fruit;
Man in the day or wind at night
Laid the crops low, broke the grape's joy.

Once in this wind the summer blood
Knocked in the flesh that decked the vine,
Once in this bread
The oat was merry in the wind;
Man broke the sun, pulled the wind down.

This flesh you break, this blood you let
Make desolation in the vein,
Were oat and grape
Born of the sensual root and sap;
My wine you drink, my bread you snap.

AND DEATH SHALL HAVE NO DOMINION

And death shall have no dominion.
Dead men naked they shall be one
With the man in the wind and the west moon;
When their bones are picked clean and the clean bones
gone,
They shall have stars at elbow and foot;
Though they go mad they shall be sane,
Though they sink through the sea they shall rise again;
Though lovers be lost love shall not;
And death shall have no dominion.

And death shall have no dominion.
Under the windings of the sea
They lying long shall not die windily;
Twisting on racks when sinews give way,
Strapped to a wheel, yet they shall not break;
Faith in their hands shall snap in two,
And the unicorn evils run them through;
Split all ends up they shan't crack;
And death shall have no dominion.

And death shall have no dominion.
No more may gulls cry at their ears
Or waves break loud on the seashores;
Where blew a flower may a flower no more
Lift its head to the blows of the rain;
Though they be mad and dead as nails,
Heads of the characters hammer through daisies;
Break in the sun till the sun breaks down,
And death shall have no dominion.

POEM IN OCTOBER

It was my thirtieth year to heaven
Woke to my hearing from harbour and neighbour wood
And the mussel pooled and the heron
Priested shore
The morning beckon
With water praying and call of seagull and rook
And the knock of sailing boats on the net webbed wall
Myself to set foot
That second
In the still sleeping town and set forth.

My birthday began with the water-
Birds and the birds of the winged trees flying my name
Above the farms and the white horses
And I rose
In rainy autumn
And walked abroad in a shower of all my days.
High tide and the heron dived when I took the road
Over the border
And the gates
Of the town closed as the town awoke.

A springful of larks in a rolling
Cloud and the roadside bushes brimming with whistling
Blackbirds and the sun of October
Summery
On the hill's shoulder,
Here were fond climates and sweet singers suddenly
Come in the morning where I wandered and listened
To the rain wringing
Wind blow cold
In the wood faraway under me.

Pale rain over the dwindling harbour
And over the sea wet church the size of a snail
With its horns through mist and the castle
Brown as owls
But all the gardens
Of spring and summer were blooming in the tall tales
Beyond the border and under the lark full cloud.
There could I marvel
My birthday
Away but the weather turned around.

It turned away from the blithe country
And down the other air and the blue altered sky
Streamed again a wonder of summer
With apples
Pears and red currants
And I saw in the turning so clearly a child's
Forgotten mornings when he walked with his mother
Through the parables
Of sun light
And the legends of the green chapels

And the twice told fields of infancy
That his tears burned my cheeks and his heart moved
in mine.
These were the woods the river and sea
Where a boy
In the listening
Summertime of the dead whispered the truth of his joy
To the trees and the stones and the fish in the tide.
And the mystery
Sang alive
Still in the water and singingbirds.

And there could I marvel my birthday
Away but the weather turned round. And the true
Joy of the long dead child sang burning
In the sun.
It was my thirtieth
Year to heaven stood there then in the summer noon
Though the town below lay leaved with October blood.
O may my heart's truth
Still be sung
On this high hill in a year's turning.

IN MY CRAFT OR SULLEN ART

In my craft or sullen art
Exercised in the still night
When only the moon rages
And the lovers lie abed
With all their griefs in their arms,
I labour by singing light
Not for ambition or bread
Or the strut and trade of charms
On the ivory stages
But for the common wages
Of their most secret heart.

Not for the proud man apart
From the raging moon I write
On these spindrift pages
Nor for the towering dead
With their nightingales and psalms
But for the lovers, their arms
Round the griefs of the ages,
Who pay no praise or wages
Nor heed my craft or art.

GASCOYNE

David Gascoyne (*b.* 1916) had already, when a selection of his poems appeared in *Poets of To-morrow*, Third Selection, 1942, decided to abandon the surrealist manner. The following poems are from *Poems 1937-1942*, which contains drawings specially designed for the book by Graham Sutherland.

FÊTE

After long thirst for sky, there was the sky,
That aether lake: vast azure canopy
Intensely stretched between *horizons' ends*!

Along the quays
The panes of opening windows flashed like wings,
Weaving long rays among the leafless trees;
Sirens of drifting barges sang:
And the whole day
Drank in the fecund flowing of the sky.

And on the outskirts of the town
Where the last house-blocks take their vacant stare
Across the straggling zone, and rusty streams
Among brown squares of threadbare soil
Persist their irrigating ooze, a savage train
Tore through a cutting with *triumphant screams*,
Releasing streamers of thick whirling breath
Which climbed and were suspended like presentiments
 on high . . .

Once more the earth, its buried spirit stirred,
Aspired towards the Summer's splendid burning
And an illustrious death.

Paris, 1938.

A WARTIME DAWN

Dulled by the slow glare of the yellow bulb;
As far from sleep still as at any hour
Since distant midnight; with a hollow skull
In which white vapours seem to reel
Among limp muddles of old thought; till eyes
Collapse into themselves like clams in mud . . .
Hand paws the wall to reach the chilly switch;
Then nerve-shot darkness gradually shakes
Throughout the room. *Lie still* . . . Limbs twitch;
Relapse to immobility's faint ache. And time
A while relaxes; space turns wholly black.

But deep in the velvet crater of the ear
A chip of sound abruptly irritates.
A second, a third chirp; and then another far
Emphatic trill and chirrup shrills in answer; notes
From all directions round pluck at the strings
Of hearing with frail finely-sharpened claws.
And in an instant, every wakened bird
Across surrounding miles of air
Outside, is sowing like a scintillating sand
Its throat's incessantly replenished store
Of tuneless singsong, timeless, aimless, blind.

Draw now with prickling hand the curtains back;
Unpin the blackout-cloth; let in
Grim crack-of-dawn's first glimmer through the glass.
All's yet half sunk in Yesterday's stale death,
Obscurely still beneath a moist-tinged blank
Sky like the inside of a deaf mute's mouth . . .
Nearest within the window's sight, ash-pale
Against a cinder coloured wall, the white
Pearblossom hovers like a stare; rain-wet
The further housetops weakly shine; and there,
Beyond, hangs flaccidly a lone barrage-balloon.

An incommunicable desolation weighs
Like depths of stagnant water on this break of day.—
Long meditation without thought.—Until a breeze
From some pure Nowhere straying, stirs
A pang of poignant odour from the earth, an unheard
sigh
Pregnant with sap's sweet tang and raw soil's fine
Aroma, smell of stone, and acrid breath
Of gravel puddles. While the brooding green
Of nearby gardens' grass and trees, and quiet flat
Blue leaves, the distant lilac mirages, are made
Clear by increasing daylight, and intensified.

Now head sinks into pillows in retreat
Before this morning's hovering advance;
(Behind loose lids, in sleep's warm porch, half hears
White hollow clink of bottles,—dragging crunch
Of milk-cart wheels,—and presently a snatch
Of windy whistling as the newsboy's bike winds near,
Distributing to neighbour's peaceful steps
Reports of last-night's battles); at last sleeps.
While early guns on Norway's bitter coast
Where faceless troops are landing, renew fire:
And one more day of War starts everywhere.

April, 1940.

LACHRYMAE

Slow are the years of light:
                                        and more immense
Than the imagination. And the years return
Until the Unity is filled. And heavy are
The lengths of Time with the slow weight of tears.
Since Thou didst weep, on a remote hill-side
Beneath the olive-trees, fires of unnumbered stars
Have burnt the years away, until we see them now:
Since Thou didst weep, as many tears
Have flowed like hourglass sand.
Thy tears were all.
And when our secret face
Is blind because of the mysterious
Surging of tears wrung by our most profound
Presentiment of evil in man's fate, our cruellest wounds
Become Thy stigmata. They are Thy tears which fall.

ALUN LEWIS

Alun Lewis (1918–1944) came from the mining valleys of South Wales. He met his death in an accident in Burma, when a lieutenant in The South Wales Borderers, having published only two volumes, both of which, however, attracted considerable notice—*Raiders' Dawn* (1942), poetry, and *The Last Inspection*, short stories.

THE SENTRY

I have begun to die.
For now at last I know
That there is no escape
From Night. Not any dream
Nor breathless images of sleep
Touch my bat's-eyes. I hang
Leathery-arid from the hidden roof
Of Night, and sleeplessly
I watch within Sleep's province.

I have left
The lovely bodies of the boy and girl
Deep in each other's placid arms;
And I have left
The beautiful lanes of sleep
That barefoot lovers follow to this last
Cold shore of thought I guard.
I have begun to die
And the guns' implacable silence
Is my black interim, my youth and age,
In the flower of fury, the folded poppy,
Night.

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LINES ON A TUDOR MANSION

Slim sunburnt girls adorn
Lawns browsed by fawn and doe.
Through three long centuries this house
Has mellowed in and known
Only the seasonal fulfilment
And the commemorated generations.

But *we* know
Samson dead
And Delilah dirtying her hair
In the dust of the fallen
Faiths.
We know
Violence terrible and degrading,
Beauty disfigured,
And the coward cruel brute
Shaping us in his image.

So, grey assured house, surviving change,
For all your cypresses and waving white
Potato rows and clustered irises, no more
Than woodpecker or mouse do we desire
Your burnished peace and all your storied past.

We are of Life,
Teeming and musical
Perfect and instant
As the soft silk flash of the swifts
Which do not care for the houses of the wealthy,
But have instead their own instinctive life,
The flight and rhythm of the blood.

Wherefore we leave no monumental homes,
No marble cenotaphs inscribed with names.

Only the fleeting sunlight in the forest,
And dragonflies' blue flicker on quiet pools
Will perpetuate our vision

Who die young.

RAIDERS' DAWN

Softly the civilized
Centuries fall,
Paper on paper,
Peter on Paul.

And lovers waking
From the night—
Eternity's masters,
Slaves of Time—
Recognize only
The drifting white
Fall of small faces
In pits of lime.

Blue necklace left
On a charred chair
Tell that Beauty
Was startled there.

THE RHONDDA

Hum of shaft-wheel, whirr and clamour
Of steel hammers overbeat, din down
Water-hag's slander. Greasy Rhondda
River throws about the boulders
Veils of scum to mark the ancient
Degraded union of stone and water.

Unwashed colliers by the river
Gamble for luck the pavements hide.
Kids float tins down dirty rapids.
Coal-dust rings the scruffy willows.
Circe is a drab.
She gives men what they know.
Daily to her pitch-black shaft
Her whirring wheels suck husbands out of sleep.
She for her profit takes their hands and eyes.

But the fat flabby-breasted wives
Have grown accustomed to her ways.
They scrub, make tea, peel the potatoes
Without counting the days.

KEYES

SIDNEY KEYES (1922–1943) was born at Dartford, Kent, and educated at Tonbridge School and Oxford. Commissioned in the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment, he was killed in Tunisia. For his two volumes of poetry, *The Iron Laurel* (1942) and *The Cruel Solstice* (1943), he was awarded posthumously the Hawthornden Prize.

WAR POET

I am the man who looked for peace and found
My own eyes barbed.
I am the man who groped for words and found
An arrow in my hand.
I am the builder whose firm walls surround
A slipping land.
When I grow sick or mad
Mock me not nor chain me:
When I reach for the wind
Cast me not down:
Though my face is a burnt book
And a wasted town.

March 1942.

ST. JOHN BAPTIST

I, John, not reed but root;
Not vested priest nor saviour but a voice
Crying daylong like a cricket in the heat,
Demand your worship. Not of me
But of the traveller I am calling
From beyond Jordan and the limestone hills,
Whose runner and rude servant I am only.
Not man entirely but God's watchman,
I dwell among these blistered rocks
Awaiting the wide dawn, the wonder
Of His first coming and the Dove's descent.

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PHEASANT

Cock stubble-searching pheasant, delicate
Stepper, Cathayan bird, you fire
The landscape, as across the hollow lyre
Quick fingers burn the moment: call your mate
From the deep woods tonight, for your surprised
Metallic summons answers me like wire
Thrilling with messages, and I cannot wait
To catch its evening import, half-surmised.
Others may speak these things, but you alone
Fear never noise, make the damp thickets ring
With your assertions, set the afternoon
Alight with coloured pride. Your image glows
At autumn's centre—bright, unquestioning
Exotic bird, haunter of autumn hedgerows.

THE KESTRELS

When I would think of you, my mind holds only
The small defiant kestrels—how they cut
The raincloud with sharp wings, continually circling
Above a storm-rocked elm, with passionate cries.
It was an early month. The plow cut hard.
The may was knobbed with chilly buds. My folly
Was great enough to lull away my pride.
There is no virtue now in blind reliance
On place or person or the forms of love.
The storm bears down the pivotal tree, the cloud
Turns to the net of an inhuman fowler
And drags us from the air. Our wings are clipped.
Yet still our love and luck lies in our parting:
Those cries and wings surprise our surest act.

PLOWMAN

Time was I was a plowman driving
Hard furrows, never resting, under the moon
Or in the frostbound bright-eyed morning
Labouring still; my team sleek-hided
As mulberry leaves, my team my best delight
After the sidelong blade my hero.
My iron-shod horses, my heroic walkers.
Now all that's finished. Rain's fallen now
Smudging my furrows, the comfortable
Elms are windpicked and harbour now no singer
Or southward homing bird; my horses grazing
Impossible mountain-sides, long-frogged and lonely.
And I'm gone on the roads, a peevish man
Contending with the landscape, arguing
With shrike and shrewmouse and my face in puddles;
A tiresome man not listened to nor housed
By the wise housewife, not kissed nor handled
By any but wild weeds and summer winds.
Time was I was a fine strong fellow
Followed by girls. Now I keep company
Only with seasons and the cold crazy moon.

EPITHALAMIUM

O you will have no bells and the winter is coming,
But now the corn lies down to the stumbling thresher,
The sycamore drops its yellow-winged projectiles
And winter is coming, but first the season of fruit.

Your bells will be the voices of autumn rivers,
Your wine will be the dew on the fallen apple:
I sing for you who at the end of summer
Have crowned the year and come together at last.

There's so much burning in the autumn world.
The flames spread through the stubble, and the wind
Comes out of Russia with a smell of fire.
The reapers do not sing, but the sickle whispers
Among the leaning wheat in the heat of noon.

O you have seen, as I have seen, the folly
Of those who think lost time can be repaid:
The girl who, mad with sorrow, hung her ring
On the wind's finger, was not half so vain.
I sing for you who at the end of summer
Have crowned the year and come together at last.

These nights are kind as the memory of a mother.
The geese track south across the heavy moon.
Your winter will be a triumph of clear decision
And what incredible spring may lie beyond?
O live and love to see your happy children
Deny the sorrow of a burning world.

Though you will have no bells and the winter is coming
I sing your courage, who expect the spring.

TIMOSHENKO

Hour ten he rose, ten-sworded, every finger
A weighted blade, and strapping round his loins
The courage of attack, he threw the window
Open to look on his appointed night.

Where lay, beneath the winds and creaking flares
Tangled like lovers or alone assuming
The wanton postures of the drunk with sleep,
An army of twisted limbs and hollow faces
Thrown to and fro between the winds and shadows.
O hear the wind, the wind that shakes the dawn.
And there before the night, he was aware
Of the flayed fields of home, and black with ruin
The helpful earth under the tracks of tanks.
His bladed hand, in pity falling, mimicked
The crumpled hand lamenting the broken plow;
And the oracular metal lips in anger
Squared to the shape of the raped girl's yelling mouth.
He heard the wind explaining nature's sorrow
And humming in the wire hair of the dead.

He turned, and his great shadow on the wall
Swayed like a tree. His eyes grew cold as lead.
Then, in a rage of love and grief and pity,
He made the pencilled map alive with war.